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THE FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

SHROUDED IN CHEESECLOTH:

THE DEMISE OF SHADE TOBACCO IN FLORIDA AND GEORGIA

By

ROBERT T. PANDO

A thesis submitted to the
Department of Interdisciplinary Social Science
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

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The members of the Committee approve the thesis of Robert T. Pando defended on November 11, 2003.

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for Trilla

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ABSTRACT

For seventy-five years tobacco farmers and processors in a small district along the Florida-Georgia boundary produced shade tobacco, a specialty leaf used as the outer wrapper of premium cigars. Then, within a period of a few years, the market for the product vanished, and the industry vanished with it. This paper explores several reasons offered for the decline of the business and goes on to explore what happened to the farm owners and to their largely African American work force.

INTRODUCTION

Economic activity determines how humans live their lives. We *are* what we *"do,"* whether or not we acknowledge it. Over time, an economic subculture gives rise to separate and distinctive characteristics which vary from group to group somewhat in the same way fingerprints vary among individuals. In the United States there are many examples of economic subcultures. The New England fishing industry evolved as a reflection of the people and the environment in which it operates. The petroleum exploration industry is another example; computer technology, yet another.

Agriculture has always produced distinctive subcultures and continues to do so. The stereotypes of the cotton plantation and the western cattle ranch, even if inaccurate, are rooted in the commodities being produced, the places where they grow, and the people, both those who do the work and those who decide how to allocate available resources.

Subcultures have boundaries. For many years, in a small, demarcated area along the border between Florida and Georgia, farmers and farm workers produced shade tobacco, an unusual crop that engendered a distinctive local culture. Then suddenly, the Georgia-Florida shade tobacco industry collapsed. When asked the reason for the collapse, farmers and workers whose lives and livelihoods were bound up with shade tobacco suggest various causes. Some reasons do not seem to be adequate explanations; others are contradictory. This study examines a range of possibilities offered for the demise of shade tobacco and presents conclusions about its passing.

I contend that it was not a single phenomenon that killed the crop and its culture, but that several trends and events—some long-term, some immediate—converged, and the industry did not survive the convergence. Given the changing circumstances of the time, the 1960s and 1970s, I do not believe the industry could have survived. I am not a mystery writer and this is not a whodunit, so I will name the culprits at the beginning of the story.

I will demonstrate that the cultivation of shade tobacco in the Georgia-Florida district was both a creature and a victim of globalization, which fostered the growth of

this unusual product in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Two commercial allies of the industry, the cigar manufacturers and the U.S. government, at first contributed to the industry's growth, only to turn later and inflict grave wounds.

Another culprit in the death of the industry is modernity, in the form of a rising standard of living that finally reached African Americans in the rural South, at a later time than it reached the rest of the country. The expectations—demands—of the Southern black agricultural worker, together with federal labor legislation, finally caught up with the planters, and the economics of the business did not work any more.

A third force in this picture is consumerism, the driving force behind the world economy. The fickle consumer played hell with tobacco producers. First, he (the majority of consumers are male) liked speckled cigars, then black ones, then brown ones, then green ones. In cigar colors, each color represents a different type of seed, a different method of growing, and an alternative technique of processing. To survive, cigar makers and farmers were compelled to try to keep up with the caprices of cigar smokers. Their efforts were complicated by the challenge of declining sales of the product.

Technology was the final contributor to the death of the industry. Technology failed to provide the growers and packers with mechanization, and without mechanization, the industry remained essentially inefficient. At the same time, advancing cigar manufacturing technology innovated a synthetic replacement for natural cigar wrapper. The ersatz product did not fool anyone—it was *paper*, not a leaf of tobacco, but the price of a five-cent cigar remained a nickel, and the nickel cigar was a fierce competitor to 15- and 25-cent cigars wrapped in real tobacco.

In order to evaluate the maladies that afflicted the industry, it is necessary to understand the industry and its history. The first chapter describes shade tobacco as a subset of cigar tobacco—itself a subset of the giant international tobacco industry. The chapter summarizes the evolution of tobacco use and charts the trajectory of cigar consumption. A significant amount of the world supply of cigar wrapper tobacco was produced in the Georgia-Florida district. Historically, Sumatra, Cuba, and the Connecticut River Valley were the other primary sources. This study explores how each became an important producer.

The next two chapters describe the introduction at the start of the twentieth century of the technique of growing tobacco under shade. The innovation quickly took hold in the Georgia-Florida district, then spread to other growing regions, and the industry flourished until after mid-century, when cigar consumption began to decline. I also include a description of the industry's largest participant, a New York Stock Exchange-listed company.

The study turns to risks, to the threats faced by tobacco growers. Throughout the 150-year span of this narrative, the performance of the four major wrapper-producing areas of the world varied, sometimes wildly. Some changes in performance were caused by changes in the underlying cigar market; at other times, one region or another developed a competitive advantage that visited adversity on the other regions. The various threats finally caught up with the Georgia-Florida district. From the perspective of twenty-five years, it is now possible to perform a reasonably competent post-mortem examination of the victim.

Farmers tried to save their tobacco crop. Alternatively, they evaluated replacement crops, seeking something that would provide the financial returns, and if possible the glamour, of their beloved green weed. A chapter reviews these efforts.

Life goes on. Gadsden County, Florida and Decatur County, Georgia are still there, and most adult citizens have gainful employment, though they are perhaps not toiling at the same trade as they and their parents did a generation ago. A final chapter examines the types of crops that replaced tobacco and the forms of work that replaced the jobs in the fields and packinghouses.

Shade tobacco is now gone and it is inconceivable that it will ever return to the Georgia-Florida district. This study is designed to help us understand the reasons for its disappearance—causes that may well apply to other crops or to other economic activities. To the extent that some of these problems are remediable, perhaps we will be able to mitigate or prevent a similar economic dislocation in the future.

Previous Studies

Scholars have largely overlooked the study of shade tobacco, despite its distinctiveness as an agricultural product and the sweaty charm of its subculture. The earliest examination of the industry I found is the only one published as a book; the others are Ph.D. dissertations or master's theses. In 1897, J. B. Killebrew, the former Commissioner of Agriculture of Tennessee, and Herbert Myrick, Killebrew's associate from the tobacco industry, published *Tobacco Leaf: Its Culture and Cure, Marketing and Manufacture*. The work is a thoroughgoing account of its subject. At the time Killebrew and Myrick researched and wrote their book, "tobacco leaf" still referred primarily to cigar tobacco. Cigarettes would soon overtake cigars in popularity, but the authors were considering the past, not the future, and their study focused on cigar tobacco. The work is well crafted, but as I will illustrate later, its analysis is limited in some respects by the social attitudes of the times.

Willis Baer's *The Economic Development of the Cigar Industry in the United States*, a Ph.D. dissertation (in economics, Columbia University, 1933, self-published as a bound volume) considers both tobacco and its end product, and is an accurate and useful work. Less useful because of its narrow focus is Alvin Spurlock's thesis (agriculture, University of Florida, 1933), "Marketing of Florida Shade Tobacco." However, his record of prices and customer types is helpful.

A fallow period of three decades ended in the 1960s. Joseph Leon's master's thesis (history, Florida State University, 1962), "The cigar industry and cigar leaf tobacco in Florida during the nineteenth century," was inspired by Leon's background in the cigar industry in Cuba. Most likely fuelled by his own love for the industry, he produced a detailed and lengthy treatment of cigar making and tobacco leaf production, leaving out, however, any acknowledgement of the industry's distinctive labor structure. Ennis Chestang's dissertation (geography, Indiana University, 1965) soon followed. Chestang, later a member of the FSU geography department faculty, did not draw on the previous dissertations or theses, relying instead on articles in geography journals, Census Department records, United States Department of Agriculture publications, and extensive interviews. His study is remarkably broad; it includes a fine grasp of the economics of

the business, an understanding of the role of paternalism in the structure of the labor force, a clear-eyed treatment of the condition of African American workers, an appreciation of the cumulative skills required for cigar wrapper production, and a hopeful prospective view of the future of shade tobacco cultivation. Too hopeful, as it turns out.

Randall Kincaid published his dissertation (economics, Duke, 1967), "Economics of cigar-wrapper tobacco," shortly before the beginning of the industry meltdown. Kincaid is a shade tobacco legacy: his father was a career botanist who specialized in shade tobacco production at the Florida Experimental Station in Quincy, Florida. The younger Kincaid grew up in the tobacco fields and understood the crop and its problems intimately. His work concentrated on everything local; its scope largely excluded competitive issues and market problems. His understanding of the plight of African American field hands and their families was profound.

The most recent significant treatment of shade tobacco comes from the perspective of anthropology. Robert Zabawa's dissertation, "The transformation of farming in Gadsden County, North Florida: a micro-level example of a macro-level phenomenon" (anthropology, Northwestern, 1984) is an odd effort. Considering the ethnographic tools available to a scholar trained in anthropology, it is difficult to understand how so much effort can be invested in such a rich topic, only to result in the topic's being entirely ignored. Zabawa conducted in-depth interviews of several Gadsden County farmers. His work resulted in a competent micro-economic analysis of farmer decision-making.

Chestang's dissertation is the only comprehensive study in the scant shade tobacco literature. The others are all competent efforts, but each approaches the topic from a narrow vantage point. In the past, there were reliable journal articles, particularly in geography, but these sources have dried up. The only major piece done on cigar wrapper tobacco in almost two decades is James O'Gorman's recent *Connecticut Valley Vernacular.* O'Gorman recapitulates the industry's history very well, but his medium is a picture book, and his viewpoint is that of an art historian.

I have the advantage of historical perspective, of course. From this perspective it seems to me that earlier students of shade tobacco overlooked two forces. (In fairness, perhaps it was too early for anyone to apprehend them.) The first is globalism, in the

form of worldwide competition in the production of wrapper tobacco. Previous work has all but ignored the importance of decisions taken in Amsterdam, Bremen, or Medan—decisions about tobacco production in Columbia, Connecticut, or Pinar del Rio, Cuba.

The second overlooked influence is that of capitalism, as manifested in the role of the cigar companies. Whether or not they understood it, Florida plantation owners and Gadsden County field hands; Connecticut planters and migrant workers summering in Connecticut; Cuban expatriates in Ecuador and their Quechuan laborers—none were in control of their livelihoods or their lives. Their futures, like their pasts, were determined in offices high above Wall Street.

CHAPTER 1

TOBACCO, CIGARS, AND CIGAR LEAF

The origins of the shade tobacco industry in Georgia and Florida trace to the history of the cultivation of tobacco itself. When Europeans first arrived on American shores they found that Native Americans grew and processed the plant and used it extensively for ceremonial, medicinal, and recreational purposes. The explorers quickly adopted the use of the "Indian weede" and took it home on their return voyages. There, consumption grew slowly at first, and then more rapidly as different methods of ingesting the drug became popular. The crop grew widely in the New World and particularly well in the Caribbean area and in the eastern regions of North America.[1] As consumption increased, production increased apace. By the end of the eighteenth century, tobacco was the chief commercial crop of the American South and the most important export of the fledgling United States—distinctions ceded to cotton after 1800.[2]

From the very beginning, tobacco proved difficult to cultivate. It was labor and working capital intensive, subject to a variety of blights, and sensitive to moisture, both too little and too much. The harvested leaves required careful processing, a series of labor-intensive steps. Because it was a luxury product, at least in its early years, the final consumer bought it as a discretionary purchase, so it was subject to vagaries of economics and to whims of taste.

During the mid-1700s the market for tobacco was roiled by cycles of boom and bust. Although partly due to overproduction brought on by high prices for the crop, there were additional problems beyond the planters' control. After the Seven Years' War ended in 1763, a financial crisis originating in Amsterdam triggered a British bank crisis with the result that almost immediately credit dried up, interest rates shot upward, and commodity prices collapsed. British factors and merchants had been generous with credit; facing bankruptcy, they began to demand repayment of debts that had accrued

[1] The tobacco field has been plowed and replowed many times. A recent account is Iain Gately, *Tobacco: A Cultural History of How an Exotic Plant Seduced Civilization*, (New York: Grove Press, 2001).

[2] Joseph M. Leon, "The Cigar Industry and Cigar Leaf Tobacco in Florida During the Nineteenth Century" (master's thesis, Florida State University, 1962), 21; Willis N. Baer, "The Economic Development of the Cigar Industry in the United States" (Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1933), 28.

over a period of years.[3] Climatic conditions contributed to the planters' problems when, in the 1750s, tobacco-growing regions were plagued by drought, and in 1764 by an unusually cold growing season.[4] In a reprise of 1763, another European financial panic struck in 1772. Again, British creditors called their loans; some planters had to liquidate assets—land or slaves—to satisfy their debts.[5] In a scenario that was repeated in later times and in other countries, planters tried to escape the limitations of tobacco by planting other crops such as indigo, hemp, and wheat. By 1767, Virginia planter George Washington had switched from tobacco to a variety of grains.[6]

Cigars and Cigar Consumption

Native Americans and early colonists sometimes rolled up a quantity of tobacco leaf to form a crude cigar, but cigars did not become popular with most Europeans and European Americans for at least 200 years. Only in Spain and in Spain's American colonies were cigars in common use. In the United States, pipe smoking enjoyed some popularity, but chewing tobacco was the overwhelming mode of consumption.[7] Europeans (other than Spaniards) either took snuff or smoked leaf tobacco in pipes, usually clay pipes. During the Napoleonic Wars and the Spanish uprising, British forces occupied much of the Iberian Peninsula where they discovered the convenience of cigar smoking.[8] Two attractive trend setters of the era, the British Cavalry and Lord Byron, took up the cigar habit and added much to the cachet of the practice.[9] Even so, or perhaps because of the notoriety of cigar smokers, smoking cigars in public was considered a sign of revolutionary and liberal ideas and was banned by the conservative governments of Europe until the revolutions of 1848. The stage was set for the

[3] T. H. Breen, *Tobacco Culture: The mentality of the Great Tidewater Planters on the Eve of the Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 125-27.
[4] Breen, *Tobacco Culture*, 177.
[5] Breen, *Tobacco Culture*, 127.
[6] Breen, *Tobacco Culture*, 180-81
[7] Gately, *Tobacco*, 176.
[8] Fernando Ortiz Fernandez, *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1947), 307; Gately, *Tobacco* 151,155
[9] Gately, *Tobacco*, 155.

nineteenth century to become the Age of the Cigar and for cigars to become "the symbol of the triumphant capitalistic bourgeoisie."[10]

The new popularity of cigars began with the British adoption of the Spanish practice. In 1826 British cigar imports were essentially zero; by 1830 imports had jumped to 253,882 pounds.[11] In the U.S., cigars began growing in popularity early in the century until by the onset of the Civil War, cigar smoking was an accepted habit. One factor in this rising popularity was the Mexican War. American soldiers returned from their triumph with a taste for the dark, rich flavors of cigar tobaccos, and the cigar momentum continued to build.[12] The gold rush in California contributed to the momentum as miners quickly adopted the Spanish cigar custom.[13] For the next fifty years, peaking in 1907, the cigar was "king in the tobacco world."[14]

Cigar making and tobacco production raced to keep up with the fast-growing market. Early in the nineteenth century, cigar making was a cottage industry. As demand grew, beginning as early as 1810 in Connecticut, production moved from the home to the shop, and small tobacco manufacturers became the rule.[15] By the 1850s Connecticut had 200 cigar factories.[16] Cigar making became important in the Hudson River Valley about 1840. Later, at around the time of the Civil War, cigar making migrated toward cities, especially New York.[17]

The war brought other changes including excise taxes on tobacco products and the high War Tariff of 1862, which had the effect of discouraging imports and encouraging additional domestic cigar production. Later during the war, the War Tariff was increased. The McKinley Tariff of 1890 raised it still higher, a tariff barrier that lasted well into the twentieth century. Through 1962, the tariff effectively doubled the price of a five- or six-cent cigar. As a result, only high-priced cigar tobacco was imported, leaving domestic

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[10] Ortiz, *Cuban Counterpoint*, 307; Gately, *Tobacco*, 158.
[11] Connecticut Agricultural College, Storrs Agricultural Experiment Station, "An Economic Study of the Agriculture of the Connecticut Valley," by Clarence Irving Henderson, Bulletin 174, October 1931, 8; Gately, *Tobacco*, 158.
[12] Gene Borio, "The History of Tobacco Part II," 1997, http://www.historian.org/bysubject/tobacco2.htm, 15 October 2003.
[13] "The Story of Cigars," Cigar Association of America, 1977, 19.
[14] Leon, "The Cigar Industry," 23.
[15] Willis N. Baer, *The Economic Development of the Cigar Industry in the United States* (Lancaster, Pennsylvania: Art Printing Co., 1933), 39.
[16] Cigar Association of America, "The Story of Cigars" (Washington, D. C., 1977), 18.
[17] Baer, *Economic Development*, 41.

makers in control of the mass market.[18] Another effect of the tariff was to transfer in large measure the Cuban cigar industry to the U.S. In the twenty-year period from 1886 to 1906, Florida production rose from 92,000,000 to 331,000,000 cigars, an increase of 260 percent. By 1906 Florida was producing fifty percent more cigars than Cuba, and producing them with Cuban labor and Cuban know-how.[19]

In capitalism, the forces of economics seem inexorable. During the 1870s the price of mass-market cigars was five cents—a price that held steady into the 1970s. Adjusting for inflation, this means the price of a nickel cigar went down dramatically across the period of 100 years.[20] Technology helped lower the price of a smoke, beginning in 1883 when Oscar Hammerstein, a cigar roller, invented a cigar rolling machine that mechanized and revolutionized cigar making.[21]

Improving economics reached into the tobacco plantations, too. As late as 1840, cigar tobacco was a relatively unimportant domestic crop. Neither government nor industry recorded production figures or taxes; few articles or books appeared on the topic.[22] Generally, prior to the Civil War the tobacco grown in the free states was used in the manufacture of cigars; that grown in the slave states was used for pipe tobacco, chewing tobacco, and snuff.[23] This conclusion is supported by the 1860 Census, which listed 348 tobacco factories in Virginia and North Carolina. The factories overwhelmingly produced chewing tobacco; only six listed smoking tobacco as a product.[24] Florida was the exception to this general statement, and will be described in the next chapter of this study. Just prior to the Civil War, of the South's four fundamental manufactures—lumber, grain, cotton, and tobacco—tobacco ranked second in number of employees, third in value of product, and fourth in capital investment.[25]

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[18] Leon, "The Cigar Industry," 39.
[19] Leon, "The Cigar Industry," 40.
[20] E. R. Billings, *Tobacco: Its History, Varieties, Culture, Manufacture and Commerce, With an Account **of** its Various Modes of Use, From its First Discovery Until Now* (Hartford: American Publishing Company, 1875), 262.
[21] Cigar Association of America, "The Story of Cigars," 29.
[22] Storrs Agricultural Experiment Station, "An economic study of the agriculture of the Connecticut Valley," Clarence Irving Henderson, Bulletin 174, October 1931, 10.
[23] Leon, "The Cigar Industry," 22.
[24]Gene Borio, "The History of Tobacco Part II," 1997, http://www.historian.org/bysubject/tobacco2.htm, 15 October 2003.
[25] Leon, "The Cigar Industry," 36.

Tobacco Cultivation in Connecticut

Around 1810 Connecticut cigar makers changed from home production to shop production, and tobacco farmers in the region made a parallel change from small plots grown for small-scale home cigar production to larger plots grown as a cash crop. For the next several decades Connecticut tobacco was used as cigar filler, with the more critical, and more valuable, wrapper supplied from Maryland or from the West Indies—primarily Cuba.[26] In an effort to realize higher value, Connecticut growers began cultivating higher quality wrapper tobacco. These experiments proved satisfactory, and Connecticut tobacco became competitive with the Caribbean product.[27] By 1875, Connecticut growers had acquired seed from Cuba, and again the quality of their product improved. The Yankee growers made other production advances. Increased interest in scientific agriculture techniques led Connecticut farmers in 1892 to organize the Connecticut Tobacco Experiment Company in 1892, an organization later absorbed by the University of Connecticut's agriculture department.[28] The experiment station tested various combinations of fertilizers; the objective was to engineer a fertilizer mix effective enough to permit farmers to grow tobacco on the same plots every year instead of rotating plots or cultivating virgin land. The concept worked and as a result, tobacco farming became more efficient while at the same time assuring better control over the future of the crop.[29] The Connecticut wrapper of this period was superior in quality to any leaf previously grown in Connecticut and had no significant domestic competition.[30]

There was growing foreign competition, however, from leaf produced on the Dutch East Indies island of Sumatra. Because Sumatran tobacco was of very high quality, and was produced and shipped to the U. S. at a lower cost than domestic wrapper, Connecticut growers appealed to Washington for help in the form of a tariff barrier. Congress obliged, but the tariff proved to be only partly effective. Greater assistance for

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[26] Cigars are made of three types of tobacco. *Filler* is the name of the whole or chopped leaf that comprises most of the cigar, the body. A single thickness of *binder* surrounds the filler, holding the cigar together. A thin portion of leaf, the *wrapper*, is the final outer layer of the cigar. Wrapper leaf provides taste, aroma, and esthetic appeal. It is also elastic, a characteristic that helps the cigar hold its shape.
[27] Baer, *Economic Development*, 37.
[28] J. G. Killebrew and Herbert Myrick, *Tobacco Leaf: Its Culture and Cure, Marketing and Manufacture* (New York: Orange Judd Company, 1906), 391.
[29] Killebrew, *Tobacco Leaf*, 407.
[30] Baer, *Economic Development*, 52; Leon, "The Cigar Industry," 41.

Connecticut came in the form of an innovative production technique from Florida, where planters were beginning to grow under shade.[31] Connecticut growers had much to protect. At the end of the nineteenth century most American cigar smokers believed that the best cigars were made with Connecticut wrappers.[32]

Tobacco Cultivation in Sumatra

German cigar makers centered in the port city of Bremen were powerful forces in the European cigar industry through much of the nineteenth century. In the 1870s their source for wrapper tobacco was the Ambalema region of Colombia. The Colombian growers had a problem: the quality of their leaf was slipping, apparently because of lack of crop rotation, failure to use fertilizers, the use of poor seed, and because of a tobacco virus called *amulatamiento.* The Germans, sensitive to falling quality, insisted on improvements. In the meantime, a combination of government and private Dutch capital was developing a tobacco industry on Sumatra. The exceptional cigar wrapper that resulted is still a world standard of excellence. Quality was very high, and because of "cheap coolie labor," prices were lower than the prices of tobacco from Ambalema. Sumatran production was introduced to Europe in 1873 and by 1875, the Bremeners had switched their purchases from Ambalema product to Sumatra product.[33]

An interesting question is where did the Dutch get their seed? At least one Gadsden county family believes that the seed was bought—or stolen—in the Georgia-Florida tobacco district.[34] J. Randall Stanley's account of shade tobacco history provides additional details. Stanley reports that in the years between 1845 and the Civil War, the Dutch were the principal foreign customers for Florida leaf. According to Stanley, the Dutch bought a seed called Fowlstown Flats in Decatur County, Georgia, and this seed was the genesis of the Sumatran industry. True or not, the fact is that the Fowlstown settlement was solidly in the Georgia-Florida tobacco-producing district and the town,

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[31] Baer, *Economic Development*, 52.
[32] Killebrew, *Tobacco Leaf*, 379.
[33] John P. Harrison, "The Evolution of the Colombian Tobacco Trade, to 1875," *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 32 (May 1952): 168.
[34] Kay Davis Lay, interview by author, Sawdust, Florida, 7 June 2003.

such as it is, is still in existence, directly north of Quincy, Florida, seven miles north of the Georgia-Florida boundary.[35]

The Dutch had tried to grow tobacco in the East Indies before, on the eastern end of the island of Java, but the quality was poor. In 1863, the sultan granted a franchise to Deli Maatschappij,[36] a Dutch company, for a large area surrounding the Deli River, on the east coast of Sumatra. The enterprise was financed in part by a mercantile firm in Rotterdam. Using these funds, the company was able to produce fifty bales of tobacco in 1864. The superior quality of the tobacco induced a group of Amsterdam financiers to enter the business on a much larger scale.[37] Gerlof Homan wrote that Jacobus Nienhuys began Sumatra tobacco cultivation in 1863 near the Deli River. Deli Maatschappij went on to acquire the largest share of tobacco cultivation on Sumatra's east coast. Homan reports an initial investment in 1867 of one million guilders. By the early 1890s the company's worth had grown to 32.6 million guilders—and the company had paid considerable dividends to shareholders in the meantime.[38]

Sumatra wrapper leaf was hugely successful. American cigar makers imported at least 2.6 million pounds per year for the period between 1890 and 1910, with the average for the period of nearly five million pounds per year. During the twenty-year period, 92.3 percent of all imported wrapper leaf came from the Netherlands, with most of it from Sumatra.[39] Understandably, the attention of American cigar tobacco growers was riveted by the commercial success of Sumatran leaf.[40]

Whether or not it was grown from Georgia-Florida seed, Sumatran tobacco had unique and desirable characteristics. The leaf had a small central vein, and most of the leaf was usable. In contrast, American leaf had a large and fibrous central vein, with fibrous branches that had to be worked around. Sumatran was very thin; a pound of it

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[35] David A. Avant, Jr., *J. Randall Stanley's History of Gadsden County* (Tallahassee: L'Avant Studios, 1985), 142.
[36] "Maatschappij" is a Dutch word meaning "pioneer."
[37] Baer, *Economic Development*, 59. Baer cites Emil Mulder, *The Cultivation of Tobacco in Sumatra*, USDA Report No. 58, 1898.
[38] Gerlof D. Homan, "That 'beautiful tobacco': The Sumatra cigar wrapper and the American tariff, c. 1880-1941," *Economisch- en Sociaal-Historisch Jaarboek (1987)*: 146. There are contradictory accounts of the founding of the company and the amount of its capitalization. Homan's seems most reliable, in part because of the greater amount of detail in his article, and because the Dutch journal in which his article appears seems more reliable than the other sources.
[39] Baer, *Economic Development,* 154.
[40] Baer, *Economic Development*, 157.

contained many more square feet of serviceable wrapper than a pound of conventional tobaccos. Because of this, one pound of Sumatra leaf would wrap as many cigars as could four pounds of American leaf. Four pounds of Sumatra leaf would wrap 1,000 cigars, compared with sixteen pounds of American leaf. Burdened with American import duties, Sumatra leaf was more expensive—during the 1880s, prices ranged from $1.15 to $1.80 per pound. Even so, it was cheaper to use than Connecticut Broadleaf tobacco at $ .50 per pound.[41]

A tobacco trade magazine reported the year that significant quantities of Sumatran wrapper leaf began to arrive in the U.S.—1881, when 2,877 bales, averaging 170 pounds, landed on American docks. "Sumatra easily leads the world in the peculiarities which make up the high class wrapper leaf," wrote the anonymous author of the account, which went on to praise the tobacco's "tenuity, elasticity, beauty and uniformity." The trade journal article reported that bulk packing of the tobacco in Sumatra was very precise, so the cigar maker was able to match his purchases and final output, providing improved cost control.[42]

By the early 1880s, growers had received some tariff relief. U.S. duties on unstemmed tobacco were thirty-five cents a pound, and on stemmed leaf, fifty cents. In addition there was a 10 percent *ad valorem* tax.[43] Then in March 1883 Congress enacted a new tax that placed an effective rate of seventy-five cents per pound on Sumatran tobacco, while leaving Cuban tobacco untaxed, making the cigar manufacturers happy.[44] Some felt the Sumatran tobacco was being imported in "the grossest of frauds." The Dutch were mislabeling wrapper tobacco, claiming it was filler tobacco, which carried a much lower duty.[45] In 1886, tobacco growers petitioned Congress to curb the import of Sumatran wrapper with still higher duties. This time, cigar makers, who had previously not objected to import restrictions, changed their stance. They cited customer demand for the new leaf and said they were "absolutely compelled" to use it—that excessive duty would be inappropriate. The Dutch threatened reprisal in the form of a retaliatory tariff

[41] Homan, "'beautiful tobacco,'" 146.
[42] "The Cigar Industry in the Nineteenth Century," *Century Issue* of the *U. S. Tobacco Journal* (1900): 43.
[43] Homan, "'beautiful tobacco,'" 146.
[44] Homan, "'beautiful tobacco,'" 147.
[45] Killebrew, *Tobacco Leaf*, 380.

on U.S. petroleum. The trade dispute between the two countries ended in a standoff; Congress did not increase the tariff on Sumatran tobacco.[46]

Despite the controversy, Sumatran wrapper tobacco continued to pour into the U.S. market, as shown in Table 1. At least through 1896, most imported Sumatra leaf was used for wrappers, and most wrappers were Sumatra leaf.[47] During the 1885-1896 period, annual imports of tobacco from Sumatra grew from 2.2 million pounds to 4.6 million pounds; more than half of all U.S.-made cigars used Sumatran wrapper.[48]

Table 1

U.S. Imports of Sumatran Cigar Wrapper Tobacco, 1881-1899
In bales of approximately 170 pounds

Year	***Bales***	***Year***	***Bales***
1881	2,877	1891	8,320
1882	7,797	1892	34,243
1883	21,951	1893	19,667
1884	14,128	1894	34,823
1885	25,552	1895	21,877
1886	23,932	1896	19,110
1887	38,618	1897	28,200
1888	22,247	1898	27,727
1889	42,354	1899	23,179
1890	62,590	--	--

Source: "The Cigar Industry in the Nineteenth Century," Century Issue of the U. S. Tobacco Journal *(1900): 44.*

In addition to its own production, Deli Maatschappij marketed the output of other Deli region producers.[49] As the largest supplier of Sumatra leaf, with about one-third of the market, the company enjoyed dazzling financial performance. After twenty-five years of operations, the company was able to report a dividend of 100 percent for fiscal

[46] Homan, "'beautiful tobacco,'" 151.
[47] Killebrew, *Tobacco Leaf*, 381.
[48] Killebrew, *Tobacco Leaf*, 382.
[49] Killebrew, *Tobacco Leaf*, 384.

1893. The average annual dividend paid to stockholders between 1880 and 1893 was 75 percent.[50]

Deli Maatschappij made its operating headquarters in the Sumatran capital of Medan, today a clean and impressive provincial capital city, but at the time, an Asian backwater town. The company employed 16,000 workmen and 160 European administrators. Deli built hospitals, roads, railroads, and drainage canals. The company had its detractors; critics accused it of importing coolie labor and charged that coolies were reduced to a condition of "practical slavery."[51]

Deli Maatschappij was the first and largest organization in the Sumatra tobacco fields, and the company reaped its rewards. Smaller companies, late entrants in the field, had a harder time. By 1891, the less attractive prices of tobacco had brought about the introduction of coffee plantations, followed by heavea (rubber trees), then tea, palm oil and sisal. An area that had been a tropical forest in the 1860s was by 1940 a cultivated landscape that reflected decades of European influence.[52]

Tobacco Cultivation in Florida[53]

Tobacco culture began in the Georgia-Florida region in Gadsden County, Florida in the 1820s with the appearance of seed from Cuba and tobacco planters arriving from Virginia. John Smith, called "Virginia" Smith to distinguish him from another John Smith who had earlier moved into the area, led his immediate family and four related families into the area.[54] Until Smith arrived there was no history of tobacco growing in Florida by European Americans. Spanish colonies in the more populous Caribbean area

[50] Killebrew, *Tobacco Leaf*, 383-85. The equivalent of $1,000 invested in the company in 1880 was paid back almost ten times ($9,750) by 1893. This number is simply the total of the dividends, with no assumptions made about additional investments or interest earned. In practice, the total returns would probably have been far greater. To put it another way, the 75% average annual dividend yield makes Wall Street's current bond yields of around 5% look puny.
[51] Killebrew, *Tobacco Leaf*, 379-85
[52] Jan O. M. Broek, "The Economic Development of the Outer Provinces of the Netherlands Indies," *Geographical Review* 30 (April 1940): 191.
[53] Students of the shade tobacco industry refer to the Georgia-Florida shade tobacco district in various ways. I am using two: the "Georgia-Florida" region, or district, and, for simplicity, "Florida."
[54] Clifton Paisley, *The Red Hills of Florida 1528-1865* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1989), 128. Paisley drew from an address by Arthur J. Forman, a Gadsden planter and exporter, to a planters convention in South Carolina in 1853.

cultivated the plant extensively, and colonial authorities had seen no need to pioneer a difficult crop in a border area.[55]

Gadsden County was not Smith's original destination. He intended to take his little band further south in the territory of Florida, but the plan was thwarted when one of the wagons broke down. Surveying the area, Smith found a landscape of rich soils in relatively small fields separated by woodlands and swamps. He decided to stay. The land was ideal for intensive cultivation and for crops requiring close attention. The newly arrived farmers were concerned about subsistence; they concentrated initially on food crops, growing only small quantities of tobacco for their own use.[56] Cotton became the cash crop, and remained the primary crop even after they began raising tobacco for sale.[57] By experimentation, they found that tobacco grown in the rich non-calcareous soil[58] developed leaves that were especially desirable for wrapping cigars. As each year passed, the tobacco changed, becoming less robust in flavor—insipid, when compared with strongly flavored Cuban tobacco.[59] But it also became silky, and thinner–with an appealing spotted appearance that made it desirable for wrapper leaf.

During the 1830s, as the cigar making industry in the Northeastern United States continued to grow, it bought increasing quantities of Florida wrapper leaf. In 1842, Florida growers were confronted with a serious market problem. The demand for wrapper leaf was depressed at a time when they had already shipped their crop to New York, anticipating that it would readily be sold. Casting about for a solution to the problem, Arthur Forman, of Forman & Muse, export agent for the Florida growers, made a shipment to the cigar makers in Bremen, Germany, the center of the thriving European cigar manufacturing industry. European consumers quickly accepted the novel spotted wrapper, and Florida cigar tobacco found a healthy new market.[60]

A boom followed the potential bust as farmers increased production in 1844 and splurged in 1845, putting more new land into tobacco than ever before. The 1845 crop of

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[55] Leon, "The Cigar Industry," 47.
[56] Leon, "The Cigar Industry," 51.
[57] Paisley, *Red Hills*, 129.
[58] The term "non-calcareous" describes the limestone-free soil of the region between the Apalachicola and Ochlockonee Rivers. Typical North Florida soils contain embedments of "rotten" or "rotting" limestone—crumbling fragments of underlying limestone strata.
[59] Avant, *Gadsden County*, 60.
[60] Paisley, *Red Hills*, 129; Avant, *History of Gadsden County*, 56.

1.2 million pounds, all raised on new land in accordance with the practice of the time, resulted in an indisputable bust, an oversupply that took three years to work through.[61] Tobacco production was a roller coaster ride, as shown in Table 2. During the next 120 years, erratic year-to-year gyrations would be repeated over and again.

Table 2

Gadsden County Tobacco Production, 1843-1853
In pounds

Year	***Pounds***	***Year***	***Pounds***
1843	105,000	1849	600,000
1844	450,000	1850	600,000
1845	1,200,000	1851	360,000
1846	456,000	1852	600,000
1847	270,000	1853	600,000
1848	300,000	--	--

Source: Avant, Gadsden County, *59.*

The Civil War devastated the region's tobacco industry. Because of the blockade, farmers were unable to ship their harvest to market. Operating capital for farmers had customarily been furnished by factors and export agents, some in the North, some in the South. These funds dried up completely. Northern customers, deprived of tobacco from the South, had to find new sources—imports from Cuba, the other West Indies islands, and elsewhere. After the War, the planters were left without labor and capital to renew production. In 1870, Florida produced only 157,000 pounds of tobacco–119,000 pounds of it from Gadsden County.[62]

Little by little, the area began to recover. Farmers and former slaves worked out relationships that provided labor for the farmers, income for the workers. (The nature and value of these relationships are considered in a later chapter.) Northeastern middlemen began to buy Gadsden tobacco and to introduce more worldly commercial practices. The recently arrived firm of Carl Vogt's Sons bought a large quantity of a type of Gadsden tobacco called Little Cuba, named because it originally grew from Cuban seed and still resembled Cuban leaf. Vogt packed it in *caratas*, Cuban-style crates

[61] Avant, *Gadsden County*, 58.
[62] Leon, "The Cigar Industry," 79-80.

covered with palm bark and wrapped in denim fabric, and sold it to the trade as imported Cuban tobacco. A Gadsden man reported that the tobacco was shipped to Key West, a major port of entry for Cuban cargo, then trans-shipped to New York, identified as Cuban tobacco.[63]

As tobacco production continued to recover in the 1880s, the relentless search continued for better strains of seed. Sumatra tobacco leaf was a hot commodity; Gadsden area planters remembered that the Sumatran industry was based on Florida seed and they seem to have returned the favor. Stories vary. One account is that Col. Henry Duval, president of the Florida Central & Peninsular Railroad "secured two lbs. of Sumatra tobacco seed through some means unknown" in 1886. M. W. (Pat) Munroe, a well-known banker in Gadsden County and student of the tobacco industry, credited the Bainbridge, Georgia firm of A. Cohn & Sons with introducing Sumatran seed and spreading it around the area.[64] Florida tobacco grown from Sumatran seed was said to be "quite different from all other tobaccos grown in America, or Cuba . . . it is conservative to say that [Sumatra seed] has already revolutionized the cigar-leaf industry of Florida, and upward of 1,000,000 lbs. of it were produced in 1896."[65] Florida leaf was proclaimed thinner than other varieties, and with superior qualities of flavor and body when compared with Sumatra leaf.[66] The president of the Florida tobacco growers' association reported high productivity, measured in pounds of saleable leaf per acre, and further reported that seventy-five percent of the harvested leaf was suitable for wrapper, with the balance suitable for filler.[67]

At the same time growers began using improved seed, they also changed their practices regarding fertilization. Initially, tobacco was grown on fresh land each year. By the late 1880s growers began to experiment with fertilizers. Like the growers in Connecticut, they wanted to replenish soil nutrients so that they could use the same fields year after year. They were pleased with Peruvian guano, supplementing it with

[63] Avant, *Gadsden County*, 142.
[64] Avant, *Gadsden County*, 143.
[65] Killebrew, *Tobacco* Leaf, 437.
[66] Killebrew, *Tobacco* Leaf, 439.
[67] Killebrew, *Tobacco* Leaf, 440.

cottonseed meal. By 1889, some farmers had adapted stable manure, combining it with cottonseed meal and additives to provide minerals and trace chemicals.[68]

By the 1890s Cohn & Sons was one of several companies that had invested heavily in tobacco. Beginning as buyers and packers of the commodity, they determined to grow it as well and began by buying 15,000 to 20,000 acres of South Georgia land. Cohn & Sons named its plantation complex Amsterdam, invoking the reputation of the Dutch port as a center of tobacco commerce. Building ruins and the outlines of fields remain on the grounds, located six miles north of Havana, Florida, not far north of the Georgia state line.[69] In addition to Cohn and Vogt's Sons, other firms, mostly based in New York, established buying points or packinghouses in the region, including Straiton & Storm and Schroeder & Bon. Attracted by reliable tobacco production, another New York firm, Owl Cigar Company, established the first major cigar factory in Quincy, in 1887. Many of these firms later bought land and raised tobacco themselves. By 1890, Florida tobacco production reached 1,500,000 pounds.[70] A few years later, Owl Cigar was credited with having the most extensive operations in Gadsden county, growing both Havana leaf and Sumatran leaf on nine plantations totaling 17,000 acres. The company owned 146 large tobacco barns and 210 "tenements" for laborers.[71]

The financial panic of 1893 sent a shock wave into Florida, as in Connecticut. All over the country, financial transactions were disrupted and markets were in disarray. The consumer reacted to this macroeconomic problem by creating a microeconomic problem—cigar sales sagged. But both the financial market and the tobacco market rallied and there was no permanent damage. By the mid-1890s Florida had regained its status as a major supplier of cigar tobacco, especially wrapper leaf tobacco.[72] The stage was set for the industry's next phase—the development of shade tobacco.

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[68] Killebrew, *Tobacco* Leaf, 447; Leon, "The Cigar Industry," 94. Guano, pronounced "gyou-AH-nuh" by Florida growers, was so beneficial that they adopted the word to apply to all fertilizers. Even today, stable manure is "guano," and synthetic fertilizer bought in a bag at a garden supply store and applied to the roses around a farmhouse is "guano."

[69] Avant, *Gadsden County*, 143. Note that while individual tobacco fields were limited to a few acres, large growers often had sizable landholdings, a requirement made advisable by the early practice of growing each year's crop on virgin acreage.

[70] Avant, *Gadsden County*, 141; Killebrew, *Tobacco Leaf*, 386.

[71] Killebrew, *Tobacco Leaf*, 437.

[72] Leon, "The Cigar Industry," 95.

CHAPTER 2

SHADE TRANSFORMS THE INDUSTRY

Cigars increased in popularity throughout the nineteenth century. Even after the introduction of machine-made cigarettes in the early 1880s, more cigars than cigarettes were made and consumed in the United States. This statement does not mean a greater quantity of cigar tobacco was smoked. It means the total number of individual cigars that were painstakingly hand-rolled and smoked was greater than the total number of cigarettes produced and smoked. And each cigar was enclosed in a selected swatch of special, higher-quality tobacco leaf.

In the United States, cigar making was a fragmented industry: there were little cigar factories all over the country. Every town of any size had at least one cigar factory, however modest. In the Georgia-Florida tobacco district there were several cigar factories in the major towns—Quincy, Tallahassee, Thomasville, Bainbridge, and at least three in Havana.[1] Cigar wrapper tobacco was in high demand and growers from the major tobacco-producing regions offered their best leaf for the premium-priced market. Wrapper tobacco was available from growers in Vermont, Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Delaware, and Virginia. Wrapper tobacco, along with less specialized tobacco, also came from Southern Ontario, in the region between Detroit and Toronto.[2] South of Virginia, the only major cigar tobacco area for wrapper, binder, and filler was the four-county area centered on Quincy, Florida—Gadsden and Leon Counties in Florida, and Decatur and Grady Counties in Georgia. Madison County, Florida would later be added to the region.

Competition for high-priced wrapper tobacco was intense. Growers continually tested new types of seeds, alternate methods of cultivation, and newly developed combinations of fertilizers in an effort to gain a competitive edge. Tobacco farmers who were not risk-takers took a passive risk: by not attempting innovations, each crop year represented a gamble that the market would not suddenly shift to something newer and

[1] Don Genrich, interview by author, Havana, Florida, 28 February 2003.
[2] Alex Csinos, interview by author, Tifton, Georgia, 8 August 2003.

better. A major advance in tobacco cultivation, the technique of growing the plant under partial shade, dropped into this restless spider web of activity.

Growing plants in shade was not a totally new idea. In Cuba, in the 1880s, a German observer described a method of making *semilleros*—seed beds: "The utmost care is taken to protect the seeds against the stifling heat of sunrays as well as heavy showers. To this end forked sticks about three inches high, are placed around the tobacco beds, opposite one another, and into these forks thin twigs are laid, which are covered with palm-leaves in such a way as to form a slight roof . . ." A drawing accompanying the description depicted a miniature version of what would soon become shade tobacco.[3]

The next step—the development of the concept of shading the growing adult plant—is murky. Some of the literature credits Connecticut growers, but the dates cited are later than the dates given for Florida introduction. Connecticut was not an early adopter. One account attributes the innovation to William M. Corry, a Long Island native working in Gadsden County for the New York firm Straiton & Storm. According to this version, the experiment was made in 1899, and Corry used cheesecloth.[4] In Gadsden County, Sylvester Woodward is less specific. Woodward family lore recounts that shade tobacco was "discovered" when tobacco was planted on new ground, with some plants placed close to trees with the result that the tobacco grew in partial shade. The leaves on the shaded plants were thinner and more desirable than the leaves in full sunlight.[5]

The most believable account credits the New York firm of Schroeder & Bon, whose principals admired the thinner leaf and finer texture of tobacco cultivated in Cuba, in the shade of orange trees. They told their Florida representative, D. Alexander Shaw, to plant some of the smuggled Sumatra seed in the shade of groves. Shaw considered the suggestion, then decided to substitute wooden slats, which he believed would be more

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[3] E. R. Billings, *Tobacco: Its History, Varieties, Culture, Manufacture and Commerce, With an Account **of** its Various Modes of Use, From its First Discovery Until Now* (Hartford: American Publishing Company, 1875), 423.
[4] David A. Avant, Jr., *J. Randall Stanley's History of Gadsden County* (Tallahassee: L'Avant Studios, 1985), 152-54.
[5] Sylvester Woodward, interview by author, Gadsden County, Florida, 27 February 2002.

practical than growing tobacco in and around larger plants. By the 1898 season, the firm had 100 acres of tobacco growing under shade.[6]

This version is confirmed by a parallel account that dates the Cuba trip to the winter of 1895-96. Shaw conducted his initial experiment in 1896 on a quarter-acre plot just west of Quincy. The following year Shaw expanded the trial to a two and one-half acre plot, and the test was deemed a success. Seizing the opportunity, Shaw applied for a patent, and organized a company to build slat-shade structures. The patent was rejected—shade had already been used somewhere else, for another crop. Schroeder & Bon moved ahead. In 1898 the company planted 100 acres under shade and harvested the first crop large enough to be marketed. In 1900 the United States Department of Agriculture moved a Florida employee, Marcus L. Floyd, to the Connecticut River Valley to begin experiments there with shade tobacco. Floyd's work led to the establishment of the region as a major shade tobacco production area. The rapid expansion of shade in the Valley resulted in inflated land values, a shortage of shade slat material, and dramatic wage increases, from twenty-five cents a day to a dollar a day.[7]

Floyd performed another good deed for the industry in 1900. Before he left Gadsden County, he prepared the USDA's tobacco exhibit for the Exposition Universelle Internationale de Paris—the 1900 World's Fair. At the fair, Gadsden County shade tobacco won the grand prize.[8]

Planters had to learn to manage their new cultivation system. Both labor and materials for slats were expensive, so Florida farmers began spacing the slats further apart, bridging the wider spaces with cheesecloth. Later experimentation confirmed that they could dispense with the slats altogether by running wires across the tops of the fields and using the wires both to support the cheesecloth and to tie the stalks to prevent them from drooping. The cheesecloth is more than a protective covering over the top of the field. It forms a tent, with fabric on all four sides of the field as well as across the top. The walls reduce wind action and help prevent insect infestation. Working in Cuba after the shade method was introduced there, Heinrich Hasselbring, a German researcher,

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[6] Joseph M. Leon, "The Cigar Industry and Cigar Leaf Tobacco in Florida During the Nineteenth Century" (master's thesis, Florida State University, 1962), 21; Willis N. Baer, "The Economic Development of the Cigar Industry in the United States" (Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1933), 95.
[7] Avant, *History of Gadsden County*, 152-54.
[8] Avant, *History of Gadsden County*, 157.

succeeded in documenting the effects of cultivating tobacco under shade. He tested for temperature variations and found practically none. The temperature under the cheesecloth tent averaged only .14 degrees Fahrenheit greater than the temperature outside.[9] Relative humidity was another matter. Confirming complaints of tobacco workers, Hasselbring found higher humidity under the shade, typically between five and ten percent higher.[10] He went a step further, conducting evaporation tests inside and outside the tents. Using metal cups filled with water and spaced around the field, Hasselbring determined that the evaporation rate inside the tent was a little less than half the rate out in the open, a property of shade cultivation that has an important bearing on irrigation requirements.[11] Later experiments by Hasselbring and by researchers in Connecticut confirmed his findings. Hasselbring's final discovery was not expected. His journal article concluded with the finding that the total amount of "plant substance" on plants grown under shade was the same as on plants grown in open sunlight, but that under shade, plants had more leaves, and thinner leaves, than plants grown under normal conditions.[12] Experience in Florida confirms Hasselbring's results. Acknowledging the higher humidity under the cheesecloth, growers nonetheless give credit to the shade itself for the production of thinner, smoother, and more pliable leaves. They point out that the lower leaves on tobacco grown in the sun are thin and pliable, too—they grow in the shade of the upper leaves, which may be lush, but are also thick and tough.[13]

With their clearly visible gauze superstructures, fields of shade tobacco have an unusual and distinctive appearance, even from a distance. Beginning in the mid-1940s some shade fields were covered with yellow tents, rather than white ones, when farmers treated their cheesecloth with lead chromate, a yellow-colored fire retardant. Besides the danger of fire and hailstorms, both white and yellow tents are subject to another hazard. Under some ambient lighting conditions, flying ducks can mistake cloth-covered fields for lakes and dive into them, attempting to land.[14] A crop duster in Decatur County

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[9] Heinrich Hasselbring, "The Effect of Shading on the Transpiration and Assimilation of the Tobacco Plant in Cuba," *Botanical Gazette* 57 (April 1914): 265.
[10] Hasselbring, "Effect of Shading," 270.
[11] Hasselbring, "Effect of Shading," 268.
[12] Hasselbring, "Effect of Shading," 286.
[13] P. D. Miller, interview by author, Decatur County, Georgia, 18 June 2003.
[14] William Munroe, interview by author, Quincy, Florida, 18 June 2003

mistook a cheesecloth tent for pavement and mistakenly "landed" in a tangle of gauze, wire, and poles.[15]

The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station grew the first shade tobacco in Connecticut in 1900. Using the prized Sumatran seed, the station harvested tobacco that sold for $1.40 to $2.50 per pound, much higher prices than any other tobacco grown in the Valley.[16] Nevertheless, Connecticut growers had a hard time converting to the new method. After the first few years of trials with Sumatran seed and seed purchased in Florida, they found that Cuban seed produced better results under their growing conditions. By 1907 they had sorted out their seed problems and most farmers began the conversion to shade.[17]

If 1907 was a good year for wrapper tobacco in Connecticut, it was disastrous for the Georgia-Florida district. The firestorm of interest in the hot new product brought many inexperienced growers into the industry. The year's crop was the largest ever, and one of the poorest ever. Many new growers were attempting production on new land, not all of it suitable for tobacco. In addition, with so many growers, shade materials were in short supply. Florida's tobacco boom went bust in the fall of 1907, just as a nationwide financial panic struck. J. Randall Stanley wrote, "The great fortunes accumulated 'over night' by the pioneer shade growers, evaporated like a mist in the sun, as did the money invested by the turpentine men, doctors, lawyers, bankers and merchants, whose careers in the shade industry were short and expensive. The losses fell alike on the just and unjust . . . "[18]

After the crash of '07—both the collapse of the Florida shade tobacco market and the crash in the nation's economy—Florida growers were in precarious condition. Larger growers sought some kind of mechanism to help control the market, to damp down the highs and lows that were painful both to the farmers and to their customers, who had also been burned by the disastrous year. Two years of intermittent meetings led to the merger in 1910 of twelve of the largest growers. They organized the American Sumatra Tobacco Corporation (which everyone called "AST" or "the merger"), immediately the world's

[15] Jim Hines, interview by author, 27 October 2003.
[16] Willis N. Baer, *The Economic Development of the Cigar Industry in the United States* (Lancaster, Pennsylvania: Art Printing Co., 1933), 150.
[17] Baer, "Economic Development," 151.
[18] Avant, *Gadsden County*, 155.

largest producer and processor of cigar tobacco leaf. The consolidation eliminated much of the speculative element of shade tobacco cultivation and helped both participating growers and non-participating growers to work out of the disastrous effect of the 1907 crop year.[19]

The potential riches of shade tobacco production also tempted investors in neighboring Leon County. After the introduction of shade in 1898, Leon Countians began growing the crop, hiring Gadsden experts as needed. By 1907, Leon County had 275 acres under shade—not impressive by Gadsden County standards, but formidable nonetheless, considering the investment. The 1907 market collapse struck Leon County, too. With too many acres of tobacco and too much harvest, the market shock virtually wiped out Leon County interests.[20]

It took three years for the industry to return to profitability after the disastrous results of the 1907 season. By 1911, tobacco—for cigarettes, primarily, but also for cigars—brought so much prosperity to Middle and South Georgia it became known as Georgia's "miracle crop." Across the South, tobacco production increased during and after World War I. By 1927 tobacco had become Georgia's second most important crop (after cotton), planted on 77,000 acres; by 1939 its acreage had nearly doubled. Often bankers, who through foreclosure had acquired thousands of acres of unprofitable land, turned to tobacco cultivation. During the depression of the 1930s, tobacco planters suffered less than most farmers because of the increasing consumption of cigarettes.[21]

The state of Georgia waxed eloquent on the topic of shade tobacco. In a booklet titled, "Prosperous Georgia: The Ideal Home for All Classes,"[22] an anonymous state author wrote:

> About one thousand acres are under shade and they produce annually one million pounds of tobacco, and the profit derived therefrom is one million dollars . . .. The value of the tobacco product ranges from seventy-five cents for the varieties grown in the open to $4.20 per pound for the high-grade, shade grown Sumatra. The average yield is about one thousand pounds per

[19] Avant, *Gadsden County*, 155; William Munroe, interview by author, Sawdust, Florida, 7 June 2003.
[20] Baer, "Economic Development," 53-54.
[21] Kenneth Coleman, *A History of Georgia* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1977), 267; Phinizy Spalding, *Georgia: The WPA Guide to its Towns and Countryside* (Columbia: The University of South Carolina Press, 1990), 63.
[22] [sic]

> acre; the returns are, therefore, quickly calculated for yourself. It is a quick crop, too; planted in April, it is sold in August.[23]

The state's assertion of a four-month crop cycle is disingenuous. Seedbeds had to be prepared in December-January; further, tobacco not sold in August could remain unsold and in the farmer's inventory for up to a year. Farmers who processed and packed their own tobacco and held it for later sale could easily extend their market risk for a year or more after the state's optimistic August date.

On balance, tobacco brought prosperity to successful farmers. Timing was important; a grower who invested immediately before a market slump could be ruined, depending on the nature of his investment. But most participants exercised prudence when considering expansion and on a long-term basis, most were prosperous.

Many area farmers, particularly those in Gadsden County, had an unusual second opportunity to build long-term net worth. Two sources offered operating capital, the money farmers needed to operate during the growing season. The packers—who were often the cigar makers themselves—were one source, local banks were the other. Two bank presidents were known for their understanding of farm finance in general, and of financing shade tobacco production in particular. In Bainbridge, Frank Jones was the banker to see.[24]

In Quincy, M. W. "Pat" Munroe was president and principal shareholder of Quincy State Bank from 1892 to 1939.[25] For nearly 50 years he helped many farmers negotiate the pitfalls of the business. "Mr. Pat" was also an early supporter and shareholder of the Coca-Cola Company. In his role as financial angel to tobacco farmers, he advised them to diversify their assets, recommending that they buy and hold Coke stock. To help them accomplish this diversification, Mr. Pat often loaned the farmers the money necessary to purchase the stock, usually including the loan for the stock as part of

[23] Georgia Department of Agriculture, "Prosperous Georgia: The Ideal Home for All Classes," Serial Number 52—B, 1910, 17.
[24] P. D. Miller, interview by author, Decatur County, Georgia, 27 October 2003; Mayo Livingston, interview by author, 27 October 2003.
[25] Miles Kenan Womack, Jr., *Gadsden: A Florida County in Word and Picture* (Quincy, Gadsden County Historical Commission, 1976), 128.

the loan for farm operating funds.[26] One observer of the scene wrote that by the onset of World War II, Gadsden county residents owned up to sixty-eight percent of the outstanding shares of Coca-Cola stock. While this number is implausible, there is little doubt that Coke management could rely on a disproportionate number of shareholders from an unlikely corner of the Coca-Cola empire. A former editor of the *Tallahassee Democrat* estimated that in 1963 Gadsden County residents owned about ten percent of Coke's stock; in 1986, the *Democrat* wrote that the proportion of local holdings remained about the same. The article included an interview with Julia Woodward, daughter of Pat Munroe and a local historian. Woodward recalled that tobacco farmers enjoyed a bumper tobacco crop in 1922 and they "wisely let" Munroe plow their profits into Coca-Cola stock.[27]

Beginning in the 1920s, Florida produced more than 25 percent of the nation's shade tobacco, a market share that continued until after World War II.[28] More than half of all Gadsden County farmers grew shade; indeed, the lucrative crop dominated the area's residents. The culture of shade tobacco produced a shade tobacco culture, a society ruled by the fat and happy planters. Life was sweet for those in charge. On a typical plantation several "farm workers" were really groundskeepers, tending to the expansive yards and gardens surrounding the "big house." Field workers' wives took care of the house itself: they were the maids, cooks, nannies, and laundresses. Farmers' wives often spent mornings at each other's houses in extended coffee sessions that lasted through lunch and sometimes into the afternoon. Their younger children went with them, to be cared for by the servants at the hostess's house. For a treat the children might be asked to help themselves to a Baby Ruth candy bar—offered from a carton full of Baby Ruths.[29] The peculiar society attracted literary attention: bestselling Jazz Age author Edna Ferber chose the shade tobacco subculture as the setting for her novel *American Beauty.* Connecticut-born Mildred Savage's novel *Parrish* was also set in the flapping

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[26] William Munroe, interview by author, Quincy, Florida, 18 June 2003; Mayo Livingston, interview by author, Gadsden County, Florida, 27 February 2002. Loans of this type were not uncommon, and were legal at the time—the practice was banned in the 1930s as part of the movement to reform the stock market and the commercial banking system.
[27] "Quincy," *Tallahassee Democrat*, 25 May 1986, 1G.
[28] Alvin Harold Spurlock, "Marketing of Florida Shade Tobacco," (master's thesis, University of Florida, 1933), 48.
[29] Herschel Darsey, interview by author, 3 February 2003.

white tents of shade country. Made into a popular movie starring Troy Donahue and Connie Stevens, the potboiler instructed movie-going Americans in some of the intricacies of growing cigar wrapper.

In Florida, tobacco men were conspicuous in the ranks of the Masonic Order, the Rotary Club, and in local churches, especially Presbyterian Churches (many tobacco families were of Scots ancestry.) Growers were often mayors, bank directors, and car dealers in the trading towns of the area. Not surprisingly, intermarriage was common among tobacco clans.[30] The paterfamilias of a Decatur family describes the shade tobacco culture when he says, "We didn't talk to anyone else—we didn't need to."[31] Another aging member of the class, this one in Gadsden, recalls, "If you didn't grow shade tobacco—or finance it—you ate beneath the salt."[32]

Not all participants in the shade tobacco industry were in the country club set. A far larger number of people provided the labor force that supported the planter superstructure. A later chapter of this study gives details of how the other half lived—in this case, the other 98 percent.

Potential Threats

The 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s were good years for Florida shade growers. Because of steady demand for tobacco products, even the Depression left most of them unscathed. Nevertheless, farmers faced problems. One problem was immediate; another, long term.

A situation that required urgent attention was blackshank, a fungus that attacks tobacco plants. A severe infestation can decimate a field in a matter of days, attacking the plant beginning with the roots and spreading up the stalk. Today, growers use a variety of fungicides to control the condition, but no effective agricultural chemicals were available when blackshank struck the Florida shade region in the mid-1920s. In response to farmers' calls for aid, both Florida and Georgia state governments established experiment stations to work on the problem. In 1928 a solution came "out of nowhere,"

[30] Avant, *Gadsden County*, 156-57, 164.
[31] P. D. Miller, interview by author, Decatur County, Georgia, 18 June 2003.
[32] William Munroe, interview by author, Quincy, Florida, 29 January 2003.

according to Dr. W. B. Tisdale, the Florida plant pathologist working on the problem. In a test plot, all the tobacco plants were wiped out by blackshank—except one. Dr. Tisdale was unable to determine the reason for the survival of the single plant, but he saved the seeds for the next season, and then found that plants growing from the seeds were blackshank-resistant. From these seeds Tisdale developed "Rg," the tobacco variety that became the standard in the Florida region. Tisdale was widely credited for saving the shade tobacco industry; for his part, he acknowledged the role of luck in the process.[33]

The crisis was averted—the bullet dodged—and the industry soldiered onward, not knowing what peril it would face next. Blackshank was under control, but another threat was growing slowly during the 1920s and continued to grow during the 1930s. In Connecticut, the shade tobacco industry was gradually consolidating. Large growers were taking over smaller growers, tobacco packers were buying growers to assure steady supply, and cigar manufacturers were buying farms as a hedge against supply and pricing problems.[34] American Sumatra Tobacco Company bought Connecticut land in the first years of the company's existence; it continued to purchase land in the ensuing years. By 1940, the two largest tobacco growers in the Connecticut River Valley were AST and Consolidated Cigar.[35] The danger posed by consolidation and vertical integration became obvious a few years later.

[33] Avant, *Gadsden County*, 171-72.
[34] James F. O'Gorman, *Connecticut Valley Vernacular: The Vanishing Landscape and Architecture of the New England Tobacco Fields* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 22.
[35] Baer, *Economic Development*, 156.

CHAPTER 3

THE FLORIDA SHADE TOBACCO INDUSTRY AT MATURITY

Tom Smith's tobacco holdings were not the largest in the Georgia-Florida district. Smith had five farms, all in Gadsden County; the Miller family had nine, all in Decatur County except for one that straddled the state line; and American Sumatra Tobacco Corporation depending on the year, had forty-one**,** divided between the two states.[1] Smith's holdings were large, but his operations were typical and a description of them is helpful in understanding the business. On his five-farm operation Smith grew 175 acres of shade. He had 70-100 houses for his workers. There were 56 barns, each 42 feet wide by 120 feet long: the barns alone covered five and one-third acres. Like most shade tobacco farmers, Smith was a cattle operator as well. His 800 to 1,000 feeder cattle each year furnished the manure for the tobacco plants. Smith had 400 brood cows; to fill his excretory requirements, each fall he supplemented the year's calf production by buying additional cattle to fill out his herd. Cattle must be fed; Smith grew 1,000 acres of corn for feed, and he purchased cottonseed, citrus pulp, molasses, and nutrition concentrates to enrich the basic diet of his livestock. It was Smith's practice to feed the cattle in the tobacco barns, 100 head per barn, changing peanut hull bedding every other day. To supply the hulls, Smith grew 60 acres of peanuts. Cattle are "fed out" in about 120 days[2]; during that time, each barn produced about 300 tons of manure, or enough for about 20 acres of shade.[3]

The need for labor was seriously seasonal. Smith needed 600 to 700 workers during harvest, but only 100 when sewing cloth and making seedbeds, and only 30 in the slack season. In 1960, Smith paid his workers $4-5 per day, plus a free house, free truck rides to town to work in his tobacco processing plant, and free bus rides to town on

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[1] David A. Avant, Jr., *J. Randall Stanley's History of Gadsden County* (Tallahassee: L'Avant Studios, 1985), 169.

[2] "Fed out" refers to the practice of feeding calves for a period of time, after which they are sent to feedlots to finish fattening. They are then ready for slaughter.

[3] John Fraser Hart and Eugene Cotton Mather, "The Character of Tobacco Barns and Their Role in the Tobacco Economy of the United States," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 51 (September 1961): 287. Accepting the Smith farms as typical of the region, Hart and Mather examine them in detail.

Saturday afternoons. The planter reckoned his total cost of production at $2500 an acre, of which cloth was about $250 ($500 per acre, with a two-year life.) The rest of the cost came from seed, fertilizer, and irrigation costs, but especially from the cost of labor for tent erection, hand weeding, and multiple trips down each row of plants to "prime" (harvest) the leaves.[4]

Costs escalated over the next few years, particularly the cost of labor. By 1970 the annual production cost per acre reached $7,000-8,000. Applying these costs to a 175 acre farm like Tom Smith's results in total working capital requirements of $1,400,000. To grow tobacco in any given year, Smith needed to have $1.4 million in his savings account, or he needed to ask the bank president to lend him the money (at this lending level his relationship would be with the president, not a loan officer), or he would have to enter into a contract with a company like Consolidated Cigar or General Cigar, a contract that would provide him with the money, but would at the same time take away Smith's ability to sell his crop to the highest bidder. In actual practice, the economic choices were worse than in this simplified example. If Smith did not agree in advance to sell his crop to a cigar company, choosing instead to sell on the open market, he might elect to wait several months or a year, gambling that prices were going to improve. If he finally had to "carry" the operation for two years, his financing requirements would double, to $2.8 million. Also in actual practice, the cigar companies and the banks would not lend 100 percent of the farmer's working capital requirements. The farmer was usually required to put up 25 percent of the total.[5]

The capitalist plot got thicker. Farmers became increasingly dependent on the cigar manufacturers for their financing. The American cigar industry, based in New York, was largely Jewish owned and managed; most of the executives with whom the farmers dealt were Jewish. The farmers referred to them collectively as "the Jews," a sobriquet that, when they say it even today, sounds natural and non-pejorative. "The Jews" understood why and how to finance the farmer's inventory of unsold tobacco, and

[4] Hart, "Tobacco Barns," 288.
[5] Randall Rich Kincaid, Jr., "Economics of Cigar-Wrapper Tobacco" (Ph.D. dissertation, Duke University, 1967), 119; Robert Eugene Zabawa, "The Transformation of Farming in Gadsden County, North Florida: A Micro-Level Example of a Macro-Level Phenomenon," (Ph.D. dissertation, Northwestern University, 1984), 58; P. D. Miller, interview by author, Decatur County, Georgia, 18 June 2003; Sylvester Woodward, interview by author, Gadsden County, Florida, 27 February 2002.

they understood the mechanics of forward purchasing—buying this year's crop early in the season, before market prices are established. The Jews took much of the market risk out of the crop, and as a matter of course, received the reward risk-takers seek. "The Jews handled the money and let us rednecks grow the tobacco for them," recalls one grower, "it was a good deal for us, and it was a really good deal for the Jews." Another grower explains, "This way, they controlled the market."[6]

The Depression-burdened 1930s became the war-dominated 1940s, and the Japanese invasion shut down Sumatran cigar leaf production. Without Dutch capital and management, workers in the Dutch East Indies were unable to continue the crop. The effect on American-grown cigar tobacco was salubrious. Some companies grew "amazingly" during the "sensationally prosperous years" of 1943-47.[7] Planter Tom Smith said, "We can't match the Connecticut Valley for quality, but we moved into second place when Sumatra went out during the war."[8] Southern planters continued to increase their acreages under shade during the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s.[9]

Labor shortages plagued many industries during World War II. Fortunately for Florida growers, there was a large enough pool of underemployed labor that planting and harvesting was manageable. However, because of the shortage of labor in war industries, the situation in the Connecticut River Valley was not so good. The War Food Administration, which administered tobacco production during World War II, sponsored a program that brought in foreign workers to take care of the crop. Although they came from all over the West Indies, local people simplified the nomenclature by referring to all of them as "the Jamaicans."[10] After the war, the practice of tapping new sources of labor continued. In the 1950s, the industry brought Puerto Rican laborers, a process made easy by the fact that they were Americans. By the 1980s, Puerto Ricans had been replaced in the tobacco fields by Laotians, and some of these workers remain there today. In many ways, beginning with Polish and Italian workers one hundred years ago and continuing

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[6] Miller, interview; Sylvester Woodward, interview.
[7] David A. Avant, Jr., *J. Randall Stanley's History of Gadsden County* (Tallahassee: L'Avant Studios, 1985), 142. 166.
[8] Hart, "Tobacco Barns," 288.
[9] Robert Eugene Zabawa, "The Transformation of Farming in Gadsden County, North Florida: A Micro-Level Example of a Macro-Level Phenomenon," (Ph.D. dissertation, Northwestern University, 1984), 60.
[10] James F. O'Gorman, *Connecticut Valley Vernacular: The Vanishing Landscape and Architecture of the New England Tobacco Fields* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 44.

through American workers from the South, followed by the "Jamaicans," Puerto Ricans, and Laotians, the immigration history of the Connecticut River Valley is a microcosm of U.S. immigration history.[11]

GEORGIA-FLORIDA SHADE TOBACCO REGION

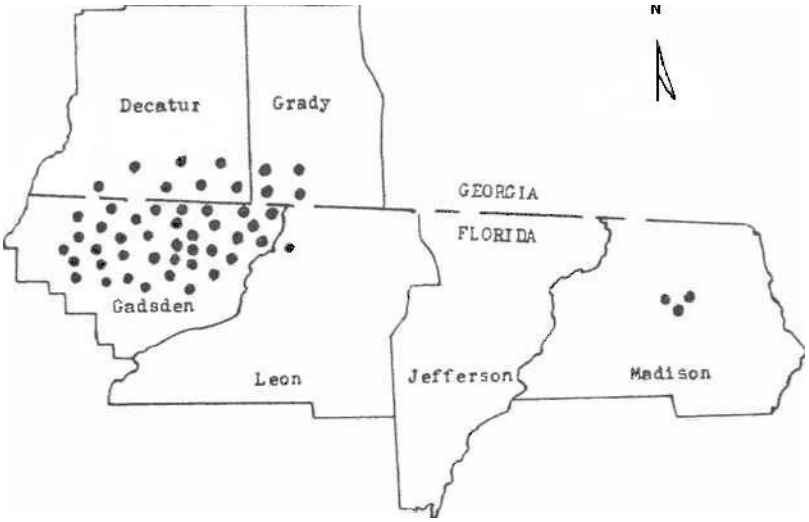

Figure 1. Approximate distribution of shade acreage in Georgia and Florida, by county. Each dot represents 100 acres. This geographic distribution and acreage total remained approximately constant from 1949 through 1969.

Source: Randall R. Kincaid, "Shade Tobacco Growing in Florida," Tallahassee: Department of Agriculture, Rev. May 1960.

The Good Times

From the early 1950s to the late 1960s, Florida shade tobacco production was at its peak with an average annual harvest of 5,300 acres.[12] Farmers took pride in the fact that their crop was free of government assistance; there were no price supports or acreage

[11] O'Gorman, *Connecticut Valley*, 45.
[12] United States Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, "Tobacco Statistics," Stock #94012, Table 112.

controls. They operated in a free market. The only impediment to overproduction was a voluntary agreement among Florida growers to pick a maximum of eighteen leaves from each plant. The growers' pride in their freedom from government aid was not fully justified. The industry continued to operate under the high tariff protection that had been in place for more than seven decades.[13]

The region bustled with activity. There were seventeen large packinghouses in Gadsden County alone, and three large cigar factories—Budd Cigar Company and Florida Cigar Company in Quincy, and Friedman and Sons in Greensboro. Quincy Box Company supplied millions of cigar boxes to all three.[14] Anthropologist Robert Zabawa estimated peak investment in the industry of $100 million in the late 1950s, including land, equipment, barns and outbuildings, packinghouses, and operating capital.[15] The distribution of this bounty between planters and workers was asymmetrical. A local newspaper described large farms as resembling the "plantations of the Old South, with rows of 'quarters' or tenant houses for the Negro laborers." It was the quintessential Deep South.[16]

In the Gadsden County seat in November 1960, the Quincy Jaycees were making plans for the annual Shade Tobacco Bowl. Florida High School, of Tallahassee, would play the Quincy High School Tigers, provided the Tigers won both of their last games of the regular season. As it happened, the home team lost and Florida High played the Blountstown Tigers instead of the Quincy Tigers. Life went on: The Leaf, Quincy's movie theater, featured *Samson and Delilah*, with Victor Mature and Susan Hayward. And Quincy Telephone Company began to prepare their customers for the conversion from "Hello, Central" to dial telephone operations. The telephone company also circulated a sheet of paper with twenty-eight names, addresses and phone numbers on it, as a supplement to the telephone book. The sheet explained that when the company printed the telephone book they failed to include some of their colored subscribers.[17]

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[13] Sam Griffin, "It's shade tobacco croppin' in the county," *The Post-Searchlight*, 29 June 1967, 10.
[14] *Tallahassee Democrat*, 21 July 1955.
[15] Zabawa, "Transformation of Farming," 370. After AST's withdrawal from tobacco production in Florida, in January 1960, total industry investment declined significantly.
[16] Mary Frances Donalson, *The Albany Sunday Herald*, 7 August 1960, 8A.
[17] *Gadsden County Times*, vol. 60, no. 45, 17 November 1960; *Gadsden County Times*, vol. 60, no. 46, 24 November 1960.

Living through the American Idyll days of the 1950s and 1960s, the people in the cigar wrapper tobacco business had no idea what was about to happen to them. The industry was mutating—changing in ways that did not bode well for the future. In Connecticut, General Cigar Company, the industry's second-largest manufacturer, had begun buying shade tobacco farms in 1951. Cullman Brothers, large Connecticut Valley growers since 1892, continued to add to their land holdings. So did the two largest growers in the region, the world's largest cigar maker, Consolidated Cigar Company, and the world's largest grower of shade tobacco, American Sumatra Tobacco Company. By 1965 there were only 25 growers in the Connecticut River Valley.[18]

Consolidation of growers and vertical integration of manufacturers and growers were dominant factors in Florida, as well. Between 1955 and 1966 the number of growers in the Georgia-Florida district fell by half, from approximately 300 to approximately 150.[19] Wrapper leaf imports were nearly zero—in 1965 imports equaled one percent of domestic production. Tariff barriers held back good-quality, low-cost wrapper tobacco as a dam holds back impounded waters. If anything happened to the tariff wall, foreign tobacco would flood the U.S. market.[20] And 'way back in the laboratory of General Cigar Company, a chemist finished development of a marketable synthetic tobacco leaf.[21]

"Largest Growers of Shaded Tobacco in the World"

Some farmers are simply farmers; others know how to run their operations "like a business." The largest grower of cigar wrapper in the world was a really big business: a Georgia-chartered public company whose stock traded on the New York Stock Exchange. At the moment in February 1910 when it was formed by the merger of twelve growers, American Sumatra Tobacco Company (later changed to Corporation) gained title to 34,000 acres of Georgia-Florida land, forty tobacco farms, and over one-half of the shade

[18] Kincaid, "Economics," 55-56; O'Gorman, *Connecticut Valley*, 68.
[19] Zabawa, "Transformation of Farming," 58; Kincaid, "Economics," 185, 188.
[20] Kincaid, "Economics," 166.
[21] Gregory Field, "Agriculture Science and the Rise and Decline of Tobacco Agriculture in the Connecticut River Valley," *Historical Journal of Massachusetts* 19 (1991): 161.

tobacco production in the region. Instantly, the company became the "Largest Growers of Shaded Tobacco in the World," the slogan the company used for the next fifty years. Even after "the merger," individuals or families owned most Florida tobacco farms; in the early years of AST, the same was true in the Connecticut River Valley.

There is no written record of the financial results or the individual farmers, or of the justifications for their business decisions.[22] In contrast, AST created documentation of its financial results, and written a public record of its performance. The company sold stock to the public, and in 1927 was admitted for trading on the New York Stock Exchange. By law and by Exchange regulations, the company had to report the results of its operations annually, and by custom, to comment on financial results and significant events of the year. Particularly after the establishment of the Securities and Exchange Commission in 1934 the company's financial reports and letters to stockholders were subject to close scrutiny for accuracy and honesty. Like most large companies of the era, AST appears to have been diligent in meeting its reporting requirements.

As a result, the company left behind a trail of readable legal documents stretching for the 33 years from 1927 to 1959. A major accounting firm audited sales and profits; the company published its results and commented on its accomplishments and failures. AST's fortunes rose and fell roughly synchronously with the shade tobacco industry as a whole. In the years leading up to the company's de-listing from the Exchange in 1959, AST reported successive years of losses in its Florida-Georgia operations. These results correspond to the results of the industry as a whole.

[22] The summary of AST's operating results and the selected highlights are excerpted from the annual reports of the company, 1927 – 1959, copies in my possession. Another complete set of the annual reports is in the Bruno Library, University of Alabama-Tuscaloosa.

Table 3
American Sumatra Tobacco Corporation
Selected Highlights, 1929 - 1958

Year	*Corporate Highlights*
1929	Forecast high profitability in 1930.
1930	Reported a loss for the year.
1932	Poor results in Florida because of bad weather.
1934	Very poor year for the industry.
1935 to 1939	Stressed that more than 86 % of sales are to manufacturers of low-priced cigars.
1940	Hurricane damage to Connecticut buildings. Poor crop in Florida; good crop in Connecticut.
1948	Both Connecticut and Florida crops are fine. Stock split three-to-one.
1949	Unexpected competition from Sumatran tobacco.
1953	Costs are high; sales are weak. Value of inventory is written down by $750,000. Drought resulted in an additional $1 million loss. Company suspends dividends to shareholders.
1956	Hurricane damage in Connecticut.
1958	Loss of $2 million. Georgia operations now described as a "marginal business."

Source: Annual Reports, American Sumatra Tobacco Corporation.

AST flourished after its formation in 1910. As the company grew, New York-based customers took note of the growth and eventually bought controlling interest in the company. It was these mostly Jewish individuals who took the company onto the New York Stock Exchange, where it remained through the Depression, through World War II and well into the post-war period. A Marxist analysis of the history of AST would suggest that the farmers appropriated the surplus labor value of the poor, near-illiterate African American workers, and that the surplus value then passed into the hands of the capitalist shareholders of AST. [23]

In the early 1950s, in a sneak attack, Deli Maatschappij, N.V., the Dutch multinational company that had established and dominated the Sumatran wrapper

[23] For a detailed explanation of this theory, see Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Essential Wallerstein* (New York: New Press, 2000).

business, quietly bought AST stock on the open market until it had acquired enough stock to control the company. In 1955 Deli took over: the Jews were out, the Dutch were in.[24]

The story doesn't end there. The personal relationship was between the New York tobacco men and the Florida farmers. Expatriate Dutch professional managers were not adequate to the task of keeping both the farmers and the cigar makers happy. The farmers ignored AST and continued working with their old colleagues, the Jews. Within five years, AST closed down all its tobacco operations in the Florida-Georgia region; the company's stock was soon delisted from the New York Exchange.[25]

The departure of AST from the region was a blow to the market stability that the company had fostered since its founding. As the largest grower and packer in the region (and in the world) AST was instrumental in smoothing out the peaks and valleys of tobacco supply and tobacco prices. Without its stabilizing influence Florida growers were exposed to market forces that they had not been required to contend with for fifty years.[26]

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[24] G. C. Munroe (not coincidentally, a nephew of banker Pat Munroe) was an employee of AST for many years and eventually ran the Florida-Georgia operations of the company. After working amicably with "the Jews" for decades, Munroe was dismayed by the unfriendly takeover that resulted in control of the company passing to a Dutch multinational company. G. C. Munroe's nephew W. D. Munroe recalls his uncle's comment, "I've spent years learning Yiddish. I'll be damned if I'm going to start learning Dutch." This anecdote is an interesting variation on the observation Eric Wolf made regarding developing markets in colonial Spanish America: "When money began to talk, it spoke Spanish rather than Nahuatl or Quechua." Eric Wolf, *Europe and the People Without History* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1982), 147.

[25] W. D. Munroe, interview. P. D. Miller, interview.

[26] Kincaid, "Economics," 112-14.

CHAPTER 4

AN INDUSTRY UNDER SIEGE: MARKET AND TECHNOLOGY ISSUES

Hops, cannabis, and wine grapes are specialty crops. The end products derived from them are not, strictly speaking, required for human subsistence. Appropriately, crops such as these ordinarily do not receive much attention from, or protection by, public policy. Cotton, corn, and wheat, on the other hand, are examples of commodity crops. Commodity growers are protected from financial adversity by important natural factors, and by effective financial and political systems put in place specifically to shield the grower from the vicissitudes of nature and of the marketplace. Commodities typically grow in many places so that the adverse effect of natural occurrences is "smoothed" over a large area. There are no worldwide droughts—not yet. Market demand for these commodities is huge and does not fluctuate markedly from year to year. Most commodities are readily stored, permitting the grower and intermediaries to wait out market disturbances. The financial services industries have constructed ingenious and elaborate schemes to protect the farmer from excessive risk, including crop insurance, loan guarantees, and the forward market, a method of buying and selling virtual commodities currently or in the future. Finally, the governments of nearly every major commodity-growing nation intervene on behalf of the farmer, giving additional protections against market risks and other risks. Governmental protection and subsidization programs are free or are furnished at low cost, paid for by the taxpayers of each nation.

Shade tobacco growers enjoyed none of these protections. Like other small specialty crops, shade tobacco was essentially naked—exposed to almost every risk of nature and of the marketplace. As a result, the wrapper tobacco economy was a perennial roller coaster ride.[1] A Gadsden County woman, member of an extended family of shade tobacco farmers, remembers that her family counted seven separate disruptions in the

[1] Gregory Field, "Agriculture Science and the Rise and Decline of Tobacco Agriculture in the Connecticut River Valley," *Historical Journal of Massachusetts* 19 (1991) 161.

tobacco market between 1901 and 1929.[2] Profitable years followed bad years, then overproduction followed profitable years, then the cycle repeated itself. The 1914 crop sold for 40 cents to 75 cents per pound, yielding fine returns, for those times, to farmers who were averaging around 1200 pounds to the acre. Prudent advisers counseled farmers not to increase their acreages, but true to form, the farmers would not be dissuaded. They planted more, and prices again slumped.[3] During the 1920s the continued existence of the crop was jeopardized by blackshank, a virulent fungus. The Depression was a serious threat to the industry, as it was to all economic activity. Shade that sold for at least 40 cents per pound in 1914 fell to 22 ½ cents per pound in 1932, and recovered only slowly in the next few years. The average income per acre during the deepest depression years was $337.50, compared with results of $2,000 annually per acre after the depression was over. The war years were very prosperous, but then, in 1947, an alarming aphid infestation threatened the entire region.[4]

Florida shade tobacco farmers faced the ordinary hazards of agriculture. Hail destroyed crops; windstorms damaged the tobacco and destroyed the cheesecloth covers. Drought was not a serious threat; most farmers installed elaborate irrigation systems. However, there was nothing a farmer could do about too *much* rain, and tobacco does not tolerate excessive moisture. The blackshank fungus thrived in wet weather; it was as dangerous to tobacco as the boll weevil was to cotton. Further, once a field was infected with blackshank, it remained infected; until relatively recently, there were no effective fungicides for the plague. Once blackshank was in the ground, the farmer often had to let the field lay fallow for several seasons or abandon it altogether. The shade tobacco farmer faced these ordinary hazards alone. There was no federal crop insurance program, and, unlike all of today's major crops, shade tobacco was not subsidized, nor were there government-enforced crop limitation programs.[5]

Most agricultural products have additional product-specific threats that the farmer must confront. As the decade of the 1960s opened, the shade tobacco farmer in the

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[2] Martha Jean Woodward, interview by author, Gadsden County, Florida, 27 February 2002.
[3] "Havana, Florida has advantages," *The Weekly True Democrat*, 12 February 1915.
[4] David A. Avant, Jr., *J. Randall Stanley's History of Gadsden County* (Tallahassee: L'Avant Studios, 1985), 169-72.
[5] Randall Rich Kincaid, Jr., "Economics of Cigar-Wrapper Tobacco" (Ph.D. dissertation, Duke University, 1967), 177. P. D. Miller, interview by author, Attapulgus, Georgia, 18 June 2003; Sylvester Woodward, interview by author, Gadsden County, Florida, 27 February 2002.

Georgia-Florida region faced six. Five are considered in this chapter; labor problems are examined in the following chapter.

1. Declining consumption
2. Competitive wrappers—high-quality leaf from historically low-labor-cost competitors and from new tobacco-growing regions
3. Oligopsony—a few powerful buyers confronting many weak sellers
4. Technology—an inability to innovate to reduce production costs, compounded by an unexpected new product technology
5. Loss of tariff protection
6. Labor problems—wages, issues rising from the federal Fair Labor Standards Act, and growing worker dissatisfaction

Connecticut River Valley growers were a little better off. While consumption and tariff issues affected them to the same degree as they affected their Southern brothers, the other threats loomed disproportionately greater in Florida.

Declining Consumption

Cigar demand grew during the last half of the nineteenth century and in the early twentieth century, peaking in 1907 at an average of 165 cigars per adult male per year.[6] Until World War II, cigars remained popular, but when American men and women went off to war, the War Department did not furnish them with cigars to smoke—it furnished them with cigarettes. By the end of the war, cigar sales had tilted downward, and continued to tilt downward for the next forty-five years. A Wall Street adage holds that "A rising tide floats all boats." The reverse is also true, even if seldom spoken: A falling tide *grounds* all boats. For many years the major cigar makers recognized the truth of the government's cigar consumption figures—that cigar sales were declining every year. As sales continued to fall, the industry felt the effects. The industry needed fewer cigar boxes, less cellophane—and it eventually did not need as much wrapper tobacco.

[6] Field, "Agricultural Science," 158.

Between 1960 and 1980 cigar consumption in the U.S. dropped by about one-third, from approximately six billion to approximately four billion per year.[7]

In fact, shade wrapper tobacco was not hard hit in the early years of the decline. Small-cigar smokers began to switch to cigarettes and the cigar companies reacted by emphasizing sales of larger cigars—cigars customarily wrapped in the shade-grown leaf. Production data show that both Connecticut shade tobacco and Florida shade tobacco production in the mid-1950s remained significantly greater than thirty years earlier. Note also that the share of market remained approximately the same with Connecticut at approximately sixty percent and Florida at approximately forty percent in both time periods.

Table 4
Shade Tobacco Production, Connecticut and Florida
Comparison of 1910-1919 with 1953-1957
In Acres in Production and Million Pounds produced

Tobacco Type	***Thousands of Acres***		***Million Pounds Produced***	
	1910-19	**1953-57**	**1910-19**	**1953-57**
Connecticut	4.90	7.98	5.77	10.04
Florida	3.60	4.94	4.01	6.35

Source: Hart, "Tobacco Barns," *285.*

In general, lower-priced cigars, in the five-to-eight cent range, were made with Florida wrappers; higher-priced cigars were clad with wrappers of Connecticut leaf, considered more desirable by the market. (This product differentiation became vital a few years later.) High-quality imports, mainly from Cuba, added an additional small segment to the upper end of the market.[8]

[7] Robert Zabawa, "Macro-Micro Linkages and Structural Transformation: The Move from Full-Time to Part-Time Farming in a North Florida Agricultural Community," *American Anthropologist* 89 (1983): 371.
[8] Zabawa, "Macro-Micro Linkages," 369.

Competitive Wrappers

Throughout the twentieth century, Florida wrapper tobacco battled with Connecticut wrapper tobacco for acceptance in the American domestic market. In this competitive context the market—or at least the cigar manufacturers—valued Connecticut tobacco more highly than the Southern leaf.[9] Florida and Connecticut also recognized the threat of foreign production, where labor costs tended to be much lower than U.S. labor costs in either region. Sumatra was a perennial challenger, at least potentially. Sumatran production centered around the provincial capital of Medan, and growers had historically enjoyed huge land concessions—at one time 668,000 acres—even though tobacco requirements were a small fraction of the total. Sumatran production benefited not only from low wage scales, but lower production costs for two reasons. First, Sumatran leaf was "sun tobacco," not requiring shade structures, with their attendant cost. Second, so much good land was available that planters could use it for tobacco only once in every eight or ten years; for that reason, the land required little fertilizer or other nutrients.[10]

There is a cachet surrounding Sumatran tobacco. Whether justified or not, cigar smokers have always regarded it as a superior wrapper leaf. This market acceptance was one of the reasons the Georgia-based company was named the American *Sumatra* Tobacco Company. An advertisement in a 1917 edition of *The Tobacco Leaf*, the leading tobacco trade journal of the time, told cigar manufacturers and retailers, "Six-Cent Cigars will sell when wrapped with *Sumatra*, not if wrapped with a substitute." The full-page ad was unsigned and carried the large-type slogan, "SUMATRA IS STILL THE KING OF WRAPPERS." The same edition of *The Tobacco Leaf* included other full-page advertisements. H. Duys & Co., a New York leaf tobacco dealer and a grower in both Florida and Cuba, offered 600 bales of the final shipment of the 1916 Sumatra tobacco crop. Another full page bannered, "Our 1917 importations amounted to over 6,500 bales of Java and Java Sumatra Tobacco, most of which has already been sold." This advertisement was signed by The Java Syndicate, comprised of three large suppliers of bulk leaf tobacco, Duys [again], Rosenwald, and Kruse, Quanier. The 80-page

[9] Kincaid, "Economics," 131.
[10] Baer, *Economic Development*, 170.

publication includes many small ad insertions, but no large ones, for tobacco from Connecticut, Florida, or from Cuba. Sumatran tobacco was clearly the desirable product.[11]

In 1931, a very attractive price added to the appeal of Sumatran tobacco, at $1.44 per lb., over the other principal import, Cuban leaf, at $4.16 per lb. While aficionados preferred the flavor of Cuban wrapper, they understood that the flavor commanded a higher price.[12] American growers realized that a large supply of desirable wrapper leaf was available for export into the U.S. market, lacking only a reduction in import duty.

Oligopsony and Vertical Integration

Monopoly describes a commercial system that has only one source, one seller. Buyers must deal with the single source of supply; if the commodity is desirable, this source sets the price to its advantage. A pharmaceutical company is monopolistic when it sets a high price on a drug for which it is the only source. *Oligopoly* describes a limited number of sources. Typically, these sellers cooperate to set prices to their advantage. During the oil "shortages" of the 1970s, OPEC, the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, was an effective oligopoly. *Oligopsony* is the buy-side counterpart of oligopoly. An oligopsony exists when there are few buyers, and these buyers are able to control the price they pay to the sellers. Usually there are many sellers.

The only customers for domestic shade tobacco were (and still are) the domestic U.S. cigar manufacturers. There were few of them, and they constituted an oligopsony. If a grower did not sell his shade to one of the cigar makers, it could be sold only as cigar filler or as cigarette tobacco. The selling price for these tobaccos is much lower than the cost of production of shade, so these are not viable alternative customers.

The independent shade tobacco grower was in a difficult situation. Not only did his customers control their purchase price from him, they also owned substantial shade tobacco production capacity. Obviously, they controlled the "transfer price"—the bookkeeping entry made when they purchased their own tobacco. Now, their negotiating

[11] Advertisement, *The Tobacco Leaf*, vol. 53, no. 2,753, 29 November 1917, 33, 21, 43.
[12] Alvin Harold Spurlock, "Marketing of Florida Shade Tobacco," (master's thesis, University of Florida, 1933), 27.

power was immense. If they were not satisfied with beating down the prices they would pay to independent growers, they could simply increase their own production.[13] *Vertical integration* is the term that describes the practice by which a company owns its sources of supply. One frequently cited example of vertical integration is United States Steel Corporation, which for more than seventy years has operated its own iron ore, limestone, and coal mines, steel mills, and transport facilities. Chemical subsidiaries turn derivatives of the coal coking process into salable goods. It is U. S. Steel's intention to capture the profits of all of its products and by-products. While cigar makers were unable to emulate U. S. Steel completely, they certainly benefited from owning and controlling the sources of the critical cigar wrapper.[14]

The combination of oligopsony and vertical integration in the cigar manufacturing was evolutionary. As described earlier in this study, when the industry was young it was highly fragmented, a characteristic typical of early stages of development. As it matured, the industry began to move toward consolidation. By 1912 consolidation had proceeded to the point that the largest ten manufacturers produced twenty-three percent of the nation's cigars. Eighteen years later, in 1930, the ten largest firms produced fifty-five percent of the total.[15] In the 1930s the manufacturers became predatory, using their control of purchase prices to squeeze higher profits out of a troubled market at the expense of the growers. During the Depression not only did tobacco prices fall, tobacco growers' share of the cigar purchase dollar fell, from 12 cents to 4½ cents.[16] The cigar manufacturers constituted an "oligopoly," wrote one student of the industry; unlike cigarette tobacco, there was no central auction market and no standard price quotation system. Lacking storage facilities, the farmers had to take what they were offered, a circumstance they came to resent.[17]

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[13] Florida growers recall that in practice, the major cigar manufacturers were careful, even respectful, in their handling of this disproportionate market power. P. D. Miller and Sylvester Woodward single out executives of Consolidated Cigar and General Cigar for taking care to conduct business in a fair and gentlemanly way.

[14] For an expanded discussion of vertical integration, see Richard P. Rumelt, *Strategy, Structure, and Economic Performance* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1986).

[15] Baer, *Economic Development*, 158.

[16] Field, "Agricultural Science," 160-61.

[17] Field, "Agricultural Science," 168, 170. The industry structure was not technically an "oligopoly," but the observer understood the situation.

Taking advantage of extremely depressed markets for the products and correspondingly depressed prices for land during the Depression, cigar manufacturers bought large shadegrown farming operations. Consolidated Cigar and Imperial Tobacco (Dutch) were especially active in this practice. In 1936 a geographer surveying the Connecticut River Valley found that most production of shade was in the hands of corporations and their managers.[18] Land consolidation continued during World War II; by the early 1960s, observers noted that the industry was more concentrated than ever. By this time, almost all Connecticut River Valley production was in the hands of corporations, most of them cigar manufacturers. Two of them, Consolidated Cigar Corporation and General Cigar Company, owned 37 percent of Connecticut Valley shade acreage.[19] Few individual farmers had the operating capital necessary to finance the crop. Finding outside financing, other than from the cigar companies that controlled the farmers' futures, became impossible. As corporate farm operations became ever larger, the decreasing number of individually owned farms was comprised only of small operations.[20]

In 1976, an economic historian examined the northern boundaries of the Connecticut River Valley and found that almost all shade produced in the area around Amherst, Massachusetts was produced by "the corporate subsidiary of a well-known conglomerate." The description fits only one company: Consolidated Cigar Corporation, a wholly owned subsidiary of the notorious conglomerate Gulf & Western Industries.[21]

Technology Failures and Successes

In the United States today almost all farming activities have been mechanized, to a greater or lesser degree, to improve productivity, to drive down costs, and in particular, to reduce the labor cost component. U. S. farmers have either mechanized their

[18] J. L. Hypes, "The Future of the Sparsely Populated Rural Towns of Connecticut," *Geographical Review* 26 (April 1936): 295-96.
[19] Kincaid, "Economics," 53.
[20] Oliver E. Baker, "Agricultural Regions of North America, Part VII—The Middle Atlantic Trucking Region," *Economic Geography* 5 (January 1929): 48.
[21] Stefano Fenoaltea, "Authority, Efficiency and Agricultural Organization in Medieval England and Beyond: A Hypothesis," *The Journal of Economic History* 35 (December 1975) 713.

production processes or have abandoned the crops to lower-cost producers in other countries. Machines now harvest even such products as grapes and nuts. Shade tobacco is an example of a crop that was not mechanized, and therefore had to be abandoned.[22]

Even though they were unable to find enough innovations to save their industry, farmers in Florida and in the Connecticut Valley benefited from some important technical advances. A plant biologist, assiduously working at the Florida experimental farms just south of Quincy, discovered a strain of seed that was resistant to the blackshank fungus. Farmers adopted new crop chemistry solutions for improved fertilization techniques and better control of insects and diseases. Improvements were possible even in the cheesecloth itself, with the adaptation of fireproofing chemicals. One group of Florida growers joined to hire a hybridizer from the North, a man who patiently pollinated flowers by hand. He synthesized a new variety of tobacco plant and then began to produce seed for sale. The new seeds were named "Gold Dust," a reference to the fact that the seed cost $150 to $180 per ounce—at a time when gold was $35 per ounce. One grower remembers keeping the seed locked in the plantation safe.[23]

But mechanization to reduce hand labor continued to elude the farmers, north and south. The cigar manufacturers provided a good example to their suppliers of wrapper leaf. They were successful in eliminating excessive labor input. Through the years, they steadily made advances in what initially seemed an impossible task: using a machine to make a hand-rolled cigar. Oscar Hammerstein, a German immigrant, made the first major development.[24] In 1883, Hammerstein was granted a patent for the first practical cigar-rolling machine, which was quickly adopted by much of the industry. Other machines followed, and the result was a steady downward direction in the production cost of cigars. Premium cigars continued to be made by hand, as they are today, but by 1931 more than eighty percent of American cigars were made by machine.[25]

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[22] Alston and Ferrie have explained the crucial role of the cotton picker in the economics of cotton production. See their *Southern Paternalism and the American Welfare State*,

[23] P. D. Miller, interview by author, Attapulgus, Georgia, 18 June 2003.

[24] Also a competent musician, Hammerstein financed the construction in 1906 of the Manhattan Opera House. His grandson Oscar Hammerstein II was one of the mid-20th century's most prolific composers.

[25] Baer, *Economic Development*, 270. For an expanded description of cigar making, including the conversion from handmade to machine production, see Robert P. Ingalls and Louis A. Perez, Jr., *Tampa Cigar Workers: A Pictorial History.* Ingalls provides additional information in his "Remembering Ybor City: the life and work of Jose Yglesias."

The closest tobacco growers could come to mechanization was the adoption in the 1950s of a Swiss stringing machine, a table-mounted contraption that permitted stringers—all female—to string the leaves mechanically on the sticks used to hang tobacco in the barn for curing. Girls and young women were able to make the transition to machine stitching; older women could not get the hang of it. It did not matter. A good hand stitcher easily matched the best machine speeds.[26] In the fields, someone thought to lay a conveyor belt between rows of tobacco plants, allowing the primers to place the leaves on the belt, which would move them to the end of the row for collection. The conveyor belt, like the stitcher, proved not to be an improvement over hand methods.[27]

In the 1940s the industry studied mechanization yet another time, looking for a way to replace the mules used for plowing, to replace the hand labor required for tying each plant to the tent ceiling, or to replace the repetitive step of priming the leaves. The agricultural economist hired to do the feasibility study brought his conclusion to the industry: mechanization was not feasible.[28] The few halting advances in technology were not able to promise salvation to an industry in trouble.

Meanwhile, the cigar makers were readying a new technology of their own—one that would deal a major blow to cigar wrapper producers. This advance in cigar making was an early example of what we now call a "peace dividend." In this case, the dividend was made payable to the manufacturers.

During World War II, a USDA research station in Kentucky, searching for alternate methods of manufacturing cardboard and paperboard, developed a method of making sheet paper from stems, broken leaves, and waste tobacco particles left over from the manufacture of cigars and cigarettes. Although this product did not prove to be commercially practical, the technology was easily adapted to the manufacture of homogenized synthetic sheet tobacco – in effect, tobacco paper. By 1955, Walter Frankenburg, head of the research laboratory at General Cigar Company, had refined the

[26] Chestang, "Gadsden County," 110. Two former stringers confirm the outcome of the competition. Patricia Green-Powell, interview by author, Bainbridge, Georgia, 30 March 2001; Kay Davis Lay, interview by author, Sawdust, Florida, 7 June 2003.
[27] Sylvester Woodward, interview by author, Gadsden County, Florida, 27 February 2002.
[28] Field, "Agricultural Science," 167.

product and patented the result. The company named the innovative product Homogenized Leaf Tobacco, or HLT, and introduced it to the market later that year.[29]

Other large companies developed similar products, and tobacco paper began to replace binder and wrapper in lower-priced cigars. Not only were binder leaf and wrapper leaf displaced in the product, but also total demand for leaf tobacco was reduced by the fact that homogenized leaf, which contained various additives, simply contained much less tobacco.[30] Better-quality cigars continued to be wrapped in whole leaf tobacco, but the switch from leaf tobacco to synthetic product in cheaper cigars exerted enormous pressure on the wrapper leaf market. One feature of the synthetic product was that tobacco destined to be pulverized for HLT now could be harvested mechanically, resulting in a decrease in the number of workers needed to bring in the harvest.[31] The economics of HLT were compelling. The cost of a five-cent cigar was reduced by one-third of a cent; the savings on a ten-cent cigar was about one cent, or about 16% of the cost of manufacturing the cigar. The cost of leaf tobacco in a ten-cent cigar was $12.00 per thousand, compared with $4.30 per thousand for the synthetic product. There was a labor saving benefit, as well. Individual leaves of tobacco had to be placed on automatic cigar machines by hand, one at a time; HLT was fed automatically from a roll.[32]

In Florida, growers were apprehensive about the increasing market penetration of the synthetic product. The *Gadsden County Times* wrote that the adoption of synthetic wrappers would reduce the cost of low- and medium-priced cigars by about $4.00 per thousand. And, at a time when there were still cigar factories in town, the newspaper estimated it would reduce the number of cigar workers by more than half.[33]

Tariff Policy

In an economic sense, the Georgia-Florida shade tobacco district and the Connecticut River Valley shade tobacco district functioned in an artificial environment. In the 1880s, when cheap, high-quality Sumatran wrapper threatened the existence of the

[29] Field, "Agricultural Science," 171.
[30] Field, "Agricultural Science," 172.
[31] Field, "Agricultural Science," 173.
[32] Kincaid, "Economics," 176.
[33] *Gadsden County Times*, vol. 60, no. 49, 15 December 1960, 1.

Connecticut wrapper industry, and with it, the weak, reborn Florida industry, Connecticut growers petitioned the federal government for help. The result of their plea was a protective tariff that sheltered all American wrapper growers. Tariff policy veered first this way, then that way over the next decades, but through it all, the high wrapper tariff remained.[34]

In the depths of the Depression, free trade advocates attempted to stimulate the international economy by lowering tariff barriers throughout the world economy. The risk to American shade tobacco producers was serious because the industry's economics were built around the protection of high tariffs. The industry survived the threat; the tariff was left in place.[35] A tariff analyst writing in 1952 noted that 78 percent of all dutiable commodities are subject to duties of less than 20 percent. U.S. tariff rates greater than 30 percent are applied to a small group of "highly selective and incongruous" commodities, including tungsten ore, watches, and cigar wrapper tobacco. Once again, the high tariff wall survived challenge.[36]

[34] Zabawa, "Macro-Micro Linkages," 369.
[35] Lynn Ramsay Edminster, "The Trade Agreements Program and American Agriculture," *The American Economic Review* 26 (March 1936): 178-79.
[36] Karl Pribham, "Rearmament and a more flexible tariff structure for the United States," *The American Economic Review* 42 (June 1952): 362.

CHAPTER 5

AN INDUSTRY UNDER SIEGE: LABOR ISSUES

Labor Problems

Before the Civil War small landholders in the Georgia-Florida region grew minor quantities of tobacco with labor supplied by the farmer and his family. But tobacco, like cotton, rice, and sugar, was also suited for large-scale farming. Slaves provided the necessary labor on tobacco plantations; in fact, typically, the farmer's investment in his workers was greater than his investment in the land they worked.[1]

After emancipation, tobacco cultivation in the area essentially disappeared. Florida Supreme Court Justice Charles H. Dupont diagnosed the problem as "manor nostalgia" and urged Gadsden people to revitalize the region's agriculture.[2] It took almost twenty years for farmers to find sources of capital and to develop a labor system to replace slavery. Under the new system, farm labor was paid—initially, by the week; later, by the day. Jonathan Wiener has written that Southern planters after the War sought to install a labor system that utilized laborers who were paid wages and who accepted an antebellum organizational structure. Wiener demonstrates that the planters' efforts largely failed, and tenancy or sharecropping became the norm.[3] Ennis Chestang relates that Florida tobacco growers were an exception to tenancy/sharecropping—to a large degree; they successfully revivified the old system.[4]

While seasonal labor was hired to help, especially during harvest, the farmer had a core group of families who lived on the farm in housing provided by the farmer. These were year-round employees, and the farmer had to provide subsistence—in his terms, he

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[1] David A. Avant, Jr., *J. Randall Stanley's History of Gadsden County* (Tallahassee: L'Avant Studios, 1985), 61, 108.
[2] Ennis Lee Chestang, "The shade-grown cigar wrapper district of Gadsden County, Florida" (Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University, 1965), 26.
[3] Jonathan M. Wiener, "Class structure and economic development in the American South, 1865-1955," *The American Historical Review* 84 (October 1979): 973.
[4] Chestang, "Gadsden County," 108,

had to "carry them"—during the off-season.[5] Economist Randall Kincaid called this practice "a necessary expense connected with growing tobacco" and calculated that in 1965, approximately ten percent of all Gadsden County farm labor expense was for low-productivity (or non-productive) jobs for male workers in the winter.[6] The term "families" meant exactly that—husbands, wives, and children all worked. All were paid, usually even the children. But "families" took on an additional meaning. Unlike the antebellum era, now, on most farms, the farm owner, his wife, and their children all worked, as well.[7]

How efficient were Florida workers? Kincaid compared the two regions during the 1960s and calculated that Connecticut workers produced twenty percent more tobacco while requiring only sixty percent of the total number of labor-hours required in Florida. Note that this number excludes the ten percent premium for "carrying" the workers through the winter. When that factor is included, Florida-Georgia labor productivity is estimated to be about fifty percent of that in the Connecticut River Valley.[8]

Florida wage rates were low. Depending on the time period in question, workers earned half what Connecticut workers were paid, or perhaps less. But the systems were different. In New England, workers did not live on the farms. Shade tobacco work was seasonal, as in Florida, but most workers found jobs for the rest of the year. In Florida, the farmer provided not only housing, but also some medical care and other care, when needed. "Other care" included various sorts of legal aid. Planters helped their workers stay out of trouble with the law. They also *were* the law on their own property. More than one grower has been heard to say, "Don't send the sheriff out here. We'll take care of things ourself."[9] On the other side of the coin, the Southern system included disfranchisement, a lack of civil rights, little or no education for workers' children, and

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[5] Randall Rich Kincaid, Jr., "Economics of Cigar-Wrapper Tobacco" (Ph.D. dissertation, Duke University, 1967) 147.
[6] Kincaid, "Economics," 140. He made the calculation in 1965. While no one had previously attempted to quantify this non-productive load factor, the 10 percent value seems reasonable, even conservative.
[7] Former planters and workers confirm this shift in work ethic: Kay Davis Lay, interview by author, Sawdust, Florida, 5 February 2003; Kenny Jerger, interview by author, Bainbridge, Georgia, 18 October 2003, P. D. Miller, interview by author, Attapulgus, Georgia, 14 March 2002; Jim Campbell, interview by author, Sawdust, Florida, 7 June 2003.
[8] Kincaid, "Economics," 150. No apparent anti-southern bias here: this economist was born and grew up in Gadsden County.
[9] Mary Frances Donalson, interview by author, Bainbridge, Georgia, 8 September 2003.

the tolerance of violence.[10] For better or worse, it was paternalism, an altogether different philosophy constructed on features left over from slavery.[11]

Florida and New England were different in other ways. In Florida, workers did not have many alternative opportunities. For many, the only alternative would be to move somewhere where there were better jobs—assuming there were any jobs at all. And many workers did not want to leave the place where they were born and where their extended families still lived. Compared to the Georgia-Florida region, there was historically a large manufacturing sector in New England. Towns and cities offered ample job opportunities; therefore, the pay scale was significantly higher.[12]

Most who studied shade in Florida addressed the question of the African American worker and examined the way workers lived and how they were treated. Not surprisingly, a discussion of living conditions in 1965 was usually different from a discussion in 1895. Writing just before 1900, J. G. Killebrew, A.M., Ph.D. and Former Commissioner of Agriculture in Tennessee, directed his skills to the question of treatment of African American laborers:

> It is often alleged by Northern writers and statisticians that the wages paid Southern laborers are much less than are paid for the same class in the North. This is more apparent than real. A Northern farm laborer, with a family, has generally to pay rent for his house and garden, purchase his supply of fuel and pay for the pasturage of any stock that he may own. All this is given freely to the Negro farm laborers of the South and they are employed throughout the whole twelve months.[13]

In another passage, Dr. Killebrew proved his mettle as a physiologist:

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[10] For more information about the Southern tolerance for violence, see Tameka Hobbs, "Lynched Twice: The Murder of A. C. Williams" (master's thesis, Florida State University, 2000), Grace Elizabeth Hale, *Making Whiteness: The Culture of /Segregation in the South, 1890-1940*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1999), and Jerrell H. Shofner, "The Legacy of Racial Slavery: Free Enterprise and Forced Labor in Florida in the 1940s," *The Journal of Southern History* 47 (August 1981).

[11] Lee J. Alston and Joseph P. Ferrie, *Southern Paternalism and the American Welfare State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 7. This study of the post-New Deal effects of paternalism was preceded by Alston and Ferrie's "Paternalism in agricultural labor contracts in the U. S. South: Implications for the growth of the welfare state." Eugene Genovese treats the historical roots of paternalism in *Roll, Jordan, Roll*; the post-emancipation literature on the topic is extensive, including Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma*, and Herbert Gutman, *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom*.

[12] J. G. Killebrew and Herbert Myrick, *Tobacco Leaf: Its Culture and Cure, Marketing and Manufacture* (New York: Orange Judd Publishing. 1934), 320.

[13] Killebrew, *Tobacco* Leaf, 331.

> They [Negroes] are peculiarly fitted to withstand the climate of the Southern states. They are scarcely affected in health in the malarial districts. The burning heat of a summer's sun only awakens in them a higher sense of enjoyment. They are children of the sun, and are as much distressed by extreme cold as the Northern laborers are by extreme heat.[14]

The man was unrelenting—he extolled the industry of the Northern worker, comparing it to the easygoing existence of the Southern Negro. Other passages were joyful paeans to the useful, contented lives of the Negroes.[15]

Not all Southern growers appreciated the qualities of the freedmen. In the early years after the Civil War, some farmers cast about for alternative sources of labor, including immigrant workers brought down from the North. In 1888 a tobacco man named George Storm, a native of Alsace (German territory at the time), brought thirty-five Alsatian men, women, and children to Gadsden County; more came the following year. Within a few years, all but one had left, moving to parts of the U.S. where the summers were not so miserable.[16] In the 1890s a farmer hired Swedish immigrants from Wisconsin; they did not last through the first full Southern summer before returning to Wisconsin.[17]

In Connecticut during the same period, farmers were grappling with their own labor issues. The country was flooded with immigrants—immigrants who did not speak English. In the opinion of U. S. Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, of Massachusetts, the country was overrun with undesirables. Simple New England farm workers with simple New England names were replaced by laborers named Wieniaski, Somaski, Ostroski, and Polenski. Lithuanians, Poles, Russians, Italians, and Germans found work hoeing and suckering tobacco; African Americans and Jews joined them. Farmers treated them all like slaves. As in the South, child labor was the norm; children as young as eight helped in the fields.[18]

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[14] Killebrew, *Tobacco* Leaf, 329.
[15] Killebrew, *Tobacco* Leaf, 331-33.
[16] Frank Jones, *History of Decatur County* (Spartanburg, South Carolina: The Reprint Company, 1980), 330; Kay Davis Lay, interview by author, Sawdust, Florida, 7 June 2003.
[17] Zabawa, "Macro-Micro Linkages," 379.
[18] James F. O'Gorman, *Connecticut Valley Vernacular: The Vanishing Landscape and Architecture of the New England Tobacco Fields* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 36-43.

The nature of work in shade tobacco fields—the types of tasks performed—did not change through the years. Because cigar makers demanded perfect leaves as wrappers, farmers never found a way to mechanize the extensive handwork. Worming, suckering, and tying had to be accomplished without damaging the tender, fast-growing plants.[19] When priming, workers could not fold a leaf or break a stem; they had to use seasoned judgment in selecting the one or two leaves to be removed from each plant.[20] Fieldwork in the 1970s was essentially the same as in the 1870s, with one exception: sometime before World War II, insecticides suitable for tobacco came into widespread use. Instead of painstakingly picking and squashing the caterpillars, workers were able to shake a can of insecticide dust above the leaves.

Today, former field laborers, black and white, remember the work as hot, sticky, and smelly—tobacco sap covered everything. Priming, a May-June-July activity in Florida and sixty days later in Connecticut, started early in the morning and continued until early evening. After priming the selected leaves, workers carefully loaded them on skids and took them to the barns to be hung and cured. Inside the barns the stickiness and smelliness were compounded by temperatures reaching to 120 degrees Fahrenheit. Although work crews in Florida included a few whites—family members and high school kids—African Americans did most of the work.[21]

Randall Kincaid's father was a Gadsden County botanist working in support of the industry. Growing up in Gadsden County, the younger Kincaid was surrounded by the shade tobacco industry and had the opportunity to observe the work force; he knew many participants well. Kincaid recalls that the income earned by black children was important to their families: in the off-season, only the men had employment. Kincaid asked an African American youth, a boy about Kincaid's own age, what he intended to do with his paycheck. The boy answered, "I always give my pay to my momma."[22]

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[19] *Worming* means picking off and destroying various species of plant-eating caterpillars; *suckering* is the process of pinching off unwanted offshoots on the stalk of the plant; the procedure of *tying* requires spiraling one end of a piece of string around the young stalk and fastening the other end to an overhead wire.

[20] *Priming* is the term for selecting and picking the individual leaf.

[21] Terry Haire, interview by author, Attapulgus, Georgia, 1 February 2003; Patricia Green-Powell, interview by author, Bainbridge, Georgia, 30 March 2001; Tommy Wheeler, interview by author, Bainbridge, Georgia, 12 July 2002.

[22] Randall Kincaid, telephone interview by author, 19 February 2003.

Adult male workers in the 1950s were paid $20 per week for six ten-hour days. Thinking back, Kincaid remembers that black families lived on "beans, potatoes, canned goods, and a lot of mullet." Living conditions were very bad. "The families lived in miserable hovels," he says, "but they lived."[23]

Today, most former workers are willing, even eager to talk about their work experiences. An 89-year-old man remembers that he had to leave school in the second grade—school was conducted in an African Baptist church—because his family needed what he could earn.[24] A woman, today a university administrator armed with an Ed.D., says that she, her brothers, and the other workers were not allowed to speak when on the job. "We were indentured servants," she recalls. She adds that today, she and her four brothers laugh about their experiences.[25] Another woman, a Ph.D. candidate in sociology, describes the work as "oppressive, exploitive . . . but with beauty."[26] A man, now an employee of the *Havana Times*, was paid $10.00 a week when he first started at the age of seven, "and they let me sleep in the field." He says, as a kid, he "enjoyed it—most of the time."[27]

Former workers who are today in their 40s, 50s, and 60s were teenagers or young adults during the final years of Florida shade. In those years, wage and hour regulations, while not scrupulously observed, nevertheless exerted strong upward pressure on workers' hourly rates. By this time, the norms of work-for-hire were respected, more or less. The farmer-laborer relationship was now similar to the same relationship in Connecticut, and in most of the rest of the American economy. It had not always been this way.

As this thesis has sought to establish, shade tobacco farmers knew their crop represented a high-stakes gamble, and they knew the largest component of the gamble was labor—both its availability and its cost. After the Civil War, emancipation made it more difficult to guarantee labor availability. Paternalism was one natural solution. The farmer would "take care of" his workers in exchange for their gratitude and loyalty. Other farmers put more muscle into their effort. Pete Daniel, among others, has recorded

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[23] Kincaid, interview.
[24] Paul Wilson, interview by author, Decatur County, Georgia, 10 September 2003.
[25] Patricia Green-Powell, interview by author, Bainbridge, Georgia, 30 March 2001.
[26] Jereann King, interview by author, Attapulgus, Georgia, 4 April 2002.
[27] James Youmas, interview by author, Quincy, Florida, 14 March 2003.

the practices of debt peonage across the South.[28] Coincidentally, the federal court case that marked the beginning of the end for peonage in the American South began in North Florida; the trial was conducted in a federal courtroom in Tallahassee. Although the victims in the landmark case were turpentine workers, they could have been shade tobacco workers, because peonage was a common practice in both industries. Former plantation owners today, when queried about the practice, quickly arrange an expression of surprise and assure the questioner that it did not occur in *my* lifetime or on *my* farm. *After all, it's against the law!* As the conversation unfolds, it frequently turns out that the interviewee is aware of other planters in the neighborhood who might have been guilty of the practice.

In fact, there is evidence of debt peonage, certainly up until World War II. The practice began almost immediately after emancipation. Writing in the 1870s, Shadrack Dickey, a plantation owner in Grady County, Georgia, repeatedly recorded the financial condition of his former slaves. He wrote that their modest wages were "more than counterbalanced by their debts, a staple diet for all workers being bacon, whiskey, and plugs of tobacco."[29] One farmer, patriarch of a Gadsden County shade tobacco family, readily discussed his family's practice of paying in scrip redeemable only at the plantation commissary. That limitation was restrictive enough, but the situation became worse. When the worker had redeemed all his scrip, the commissary would provide food and supplies on credit. A natural question is, did any of the workers get deep in debt to the commissary? The frank answer: "Lots of 'em—that was the whole point. Then they had to work for you until you finally got paid." Another planter was asked, "Did you pay in scrip?" to which the reply was, "In the '20s and '30s, but not after World War II." When Randall Kincaid studied the industry in the 1960s, he observed that workers often borrowed money from the farmers—they had no choice**.** He is clear when he defines the worker's obligation to the farmer: it was debt peonage.[30]

As far as I can tell, no one interviewed for this study, farmer or worker, was personally aware of complicity on the part of any local authorities in enforcing debt

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[28] Pete Daniel, *The Shadow of Slavery: Peonage in the South, 1901-1969* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1972).
[29] Quoted by Robert Joseph Rubanowice in *A Sense of Place in Southern Georgia: Birdsong Plantation, Farm and Nature Center* (Tallahassee: South Georgia Historical Consortium, 1994), 93.
[30] Kincaid, "Economics," 149.

peonage. There were no legally binding documents to enforce—no contracts, no promissory notes, no liens. The arrangements were verbal, with compliance required by "the code of honor."[31] This code obliged the worker to repay the debt; it also resolutely prohibited a plantation owner from employing a worker who was in debt to another plantation owner. Kincaid wrote that workers' debts to growers "tie the laborers to the farm . . . If one farmer wishes to hire a laborer away from another grower, he pays the debts of the laborer, and then the laborer is indebted to him."[32] A former tobacco grower confirmed this practice, recounting a conversation between two planters. The first requested that a field worker and his family be moved to his plantation from the plantation of the other man. After discussing the qualifications of the worker, his general health, and details of the move, the second planter said he would be agreeable to the move from his plantation to the first man's plantation, provided the worker's debt would be settled.

> "How much does he owe you?" asked the potential "buyer."
>
> "He owes me $600."
>
> "How many in the family?"
>
> "There's the man, and his wife, and two kids old enough to work."
>
> "OK—I'll take 'em."[33]

Other labor practices were undergoing radical changes. The imposition of federally mandated minimum wage rates threatened economic disruption, at least in the eyes of the planters. Agriculture was specifically exempted from minimum wage laws when the original laws were enacted in 1936. When John F. Kennedy ran for president in 1960, a campaign pledge called for a twenty-five cents per hour increase in the minimum which would affect packing house workers directly and field workers indirectly by

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[31] Mayo Livingston, interview by author, Bainbridge, Georgia, 27 October 2003. P. D. Miller, interview by author, Attapulgus, Georgia, 27 October 2003. P. D. Miller asked, who would go to the courthouse and file an illegal lien? In any event, farmers and workers I interviewed agreed that the arrangements between them were verbal and governed by custom, rather than by law. They also agreed that behind the code of honor, the threat of violence quietly lay in waiting.

[32] Kincaid, "Economics," 149-50.

[33] Jim Campbell, interview by author, Sawdust, Florida, 7 June 2003. The practice was not uncommon. Other farmers I interviewed, including P. D. Miller and Don Genrich, related similar stories. The American Civil Liberties Union, in a booklet published in 1938, quoted a Georgia farmer who described the practice as "buying the nigger." The ACLU noted that, although slavery had been legally abolished, it still existed in parts of the South. American Civil Liberties Union, "Peonage in Georgia," 1938, 5.

exerting upward pressure on wage rates in the region. Industry spokesmen railed against the interference in their business.[34] Although agriculture was added 1966, employees of shade tobacco farmers were specifically exempted. However, the practical effect of the exemption was only to buy the farmers some time, because alternative employment put upward pressure on farm wages.[35] Throughout the Georgia-Florida district, workers grumbled about low wages and anxiously waited for the minimum wage to finally reach them.[36]

Besides the New Deal concept of a minimum wage, there was another federal mandate that cut into the tobacco culture—the enforcement of child labor laws. These laws, the first of which were enacted during the Progressive Era, were designed to remove children from textile mills, mines, and other places where they were being exploited. One consequence of applying these laws to the Georgia-Florida tobacco district was to remove young children altogether from the fields. No longer would they be earning money, however paltry. No longer would they be with one or both parents during the workday. No matter that back at the shack there was little supervision, or none. Many within the industry and outside of it agreed with the observation that the children were better off in the field than at home.[37]

Although the Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* did not take effect immediately, it eventually made significant changes across the rural South. One change in particular affected shade tobacco workers. When school integration was at last implemented, county school calendars had to be merged into a single school calendar. In Gadsden County, the school term for black children ended about May 1, enabling older boys and girls to get out into the tobacco fields and barns. White schools continued for another three or four weeks; after they shut down for the summer, small numbers of white boys and girls joined the harvest. When taken in the light of the major consequences of the implementation of civil rights legislation and court action, this

[34] *Gadsden County Times*, vol. 60, no. 49, 15 December 1960.
[35] Kincaid, "Economics," 153, 160. By exempting shade tobacco workers, Congress was complicit in the campaign to hold down their wages.
[36] Chestang, "Gadsden County," 107.
[37] Randall Kincaid, telephone interview by author, 19 February 2003.

change was not earthshaking. Nevertheless, it made yet another contribution to the growing labor problems of the planter class.[38]

Out-migration had a greater effect on wage rates. During the 1950s about 25 percent of 15 to 35-year-old black males in Gadsden County moved away. The corresponding number for young black females was approximately 20 percent. Many forces were pushing wage rates upward during this period, and the substantial reduction in young workers was one of the strongest. During the 1960s wage rates climbed dramatically. Between 1960 and 1967, average daily wages (for a 10-hour day) for male workers rose from approximately $4.25 to $7.50, an increase of 76 percent. Wage rates for female workers doubled during the period, from $3.25 to $6.50 per day. The secular rise in overall wage rates coupled with the emigration of young workers accounted for this steep rise.[39]

By the end of the 1960s, a huge cost-price squeeze afflicted shade tobacco. From beneath, cost pressures on farmers were enormous. But cigar makers were importing increasing quantities of good wrapper tobacco grown in Central America and the Caribbean. Domestic growers had no room to move. Input costs—the cost of growing and processing the product—increased from $1,250 an acre in 1955, to $3,000 an acre in 1968, to over $7,000 an acre in 1977. Yet during this period, despite cost increases, the farmer's profit remained in the range of $1,000 to $2,000 per acre, as increasing costs of production, almost entirely labor, held down the profit margin. In his perennial gambler's game, the farmer had to ante up more and more money into the pot, but even when he won, he could not win it all back. Cattle and corn production were not profitable; they were breakeven activities necessary to support shade tobacco. In years when shade did poorly, cattle and corn did not make a meaningful contribution to farm income for the year.[40] Being squeezed out is an old story in farm families, but a story Florida shade tobacco farmers had not heard for a long time.

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[38] Patricia Green-Powell, interview by author, Bainbridge, Georgia, 30 March 2001; James Youmas, interview by author, Quincy, Florida, 14 March 2003; Sylvester Woodward, interview by author, Sawdust, Florida, 7 June 2003.
[39] Kincaid, "Economics," 142, 146.
[40] Robert Zabawa and Christina Gladwin, "Using anthropological tools to understand Florida's farming systems and the survival of Florida's small farmers," *Florida Journal of Anthropology* 8 (1983): 40,41.

Crisis Stage

In the early post-World War II period, a naïve observer might have assumed that the relative stability and prosperity of the shade tobacco industry would continue into the future. By the end of the 1960s, however, not only labor costs, but also declining markets, foreign leaf product, and further incursion of synthetic wrapper all combined to deteriorate seriously the economic underpinnings of the industry. Whether or not he was cognizant of all his vulnerabilities, the shade tobacco farmer was facing the future likelihood of calamity.

CHAPTER 6

COLLAPSE

The decline in cigar consumption in the United States began to accelerate in the years after the 1964 report of the Surgeon General's advisory committee. Although cigarettes were the Surgeon General's primary target, the government's efforts soon expanded to all forms of tobacco consumption. The decline in cigar smoking accelerated further in later years as state and local jurisdictions increasingly banned smoking in public places. Appendix A depicts the sober picture for large cigars, those customarily wrapped with shade leaf, summarized here in selected years.

Table 5
U. S. Large Cigar Production, 1955-1990
In Millions

Year	***Production***	***Year***	***Production***
1955	5,764	1975	4,523
1960	6,768	1980	3,454
1965	7,899	1985	2,822
1970	7,094	1990	1,896

Source: United States Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, "Tobacco Statistics," Stock #94012, Table 11.

Total cigar production, including small cigars clad in synthetic wrapper, rose to 9.2 billion in 1965 and fell to 6 billion in 1978. Stated another way, per capita cigar consumption in the U.S. dropped from an average of seventy per person in 1965 to thirty-two per person in 1977.[1] More important to the growers of shade tobacco, large cigar production—the production of cigars wrapped in natural leaf wrappers—plummeted by more than fifty percent between 1965 and 1980. The steepest decline occurred in the five-year period from 1970 to 1975, when large cigar production fell from about seven

[1] Thomas R. Lewis, *Near the Long Tidal River: Readings in the Historical Geography of Central Connecticut* (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1981), 122.

billion cigars in to four and one-half billion, a reduction of more than one-third. The Tobacco Institute, trade organization of the industry, acknowledged the decline in cigar consumption adding that, as a result, "the 1977 Connecticut shade crop was a record low."[2]

Tobacco Production Declines

With fewer cigars to manufacture, cigar makers needed less shade tobacco. Production of both Connecticut and Florida shade declined, as recorded in Appendix B, compiled from the annual statistical reports of the United States Department of Agriculture. The results of selected years are shown in the following table:

Table 6
Shade-grown Cigar Wrapper Production, 1955-1990
in Millions of Pounds

Year	***Production***	***Year***	***Production***
1955	15.6	1975	7.7
1960	21.3	1980	4.5
1965	22.9	1985	2.0
1970	14.9	1990	2.7

Source: United States Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, "Tobacco Statistics," Stock #94012, Table 108.

The decline in production tracked downward at the same time production costs of wrapper tobacco were rising. In Connecticut, farmers saw their costs increase from $5,000 per acre in 1970 to $7,500 per acre in 1979.[3] In the Connecticut River Valley during the 30-year period from 1950 to 1980, the shade tobacco harvest fell from almost

[2] Tobacco Institute, "Connecticut & Tobacco: A Chapter in America's Industrial Growth," Washington, The Tobacco Institute, 1978, 4.
[3] Lewis, *Long Tidal River*, 122.

15,000 acres to perhaps 1,300 acres. During the same 30-year period the Florida harvest went from almost 5,000 acres to none—the industry was completely extinguished.[4]

Cigars were still clad in flexible silky wrappers. Fewer cigars, it is true, but a market of four billion cigars still had to be served. Imported wrapper tobacco replaced all Florida tobacco and most Connecticut tobacco. Moreover, tobacco imports came in two forms, as leaf, and increasingly, as manufactured product—as imported cigars. The same labor economics that pushed tobacco growing out of the U. S. also progressively pushed more cigar production offshore. By 1980, cigar imports totaled approximately 118 million per year; five countries supplied 93 million units, or approximately 80 percent of the total: the Canary Islands, the Dominican Republic, Honduras, Jamaica, and Mexico. Significantly, all five grew most of their own tobacco, including wrapper tobacco.[5]

Higher Protective Tariff

The U. S. Congress originally imposed a protective tariff on imported cigar wrapper tobacco in the 1880s, in response to market acceptance of the thin, cost-efficient Sumatra leaf. Through the years, the continued existence of the tariff was threatened by periodic free trade initiatives. Once as high as $4.00 per pound, the rate had ratcheted downward until by the 1960s it reached $ .909 per pound for stemmed tobacco and $1.548 for unstemmed tobacco. Even at these lower rates, the tariff added about 25 percent to the cost of a pound of imported wrapper leaf.

In 1975, Florida growers petitioned the United States International Trade Commission (ITC), the independent agency of the federal government charged with developing trade and tariff policies, asking for higher tariffs in an attempt to make domestic wrapper tobacco economically more attractive when compared to lower-priced imported wrapper. The ITC conducted hearings, including sessions in Tallahassee, ultimately determining not to raise the $ .909 per pound tariff on stemmed tobacco. The ITC decision was consistent with the federal government's overall philosophy of

[4] Lewis, *Long Tidal River*, 127.
[5] USDA, "Tobacco Statistics," Table 195.

decreasing, rather than increasing tariffs—a philosophy that continues today. Eventually, even the $ .909 tariff rate was eliminated, but by that time, tariff protection was irrelevant.[6] A dead business no longer requires protection.

End of an Era

The final collapse of shade in Florida was dramatic. Despite declining markets during the late 1960s, shade remained a powerful economic force. In Gadsden County, it accounted for sixty-five percent of the value of all agricultural products in 1969, and was still as high as forty-five percent of the value of all agricultural products in 1974, just three years before production totally ceased. Neighboring counties growing shade tobacco had greater crop diversity than Gadsden County, but the shade growers and their workers were hit just as severely as those in Gadsden.[7] In 1969, Gadsden County Chamber of Commerce director Jack Strickland was proud to feature shade tobacco as the county's primary crop, a $35-million industry employing 18,000 people, full time and seasonal, and cultivating 6,500 acres under shade. According to Strickland, the sharp rise in the wages was responsible for the death of the industry, by 1977.[8]

Eminences Grises

The decline in cigar consumption, the increase in cigar wrapper imports, and the decline in domestic shade tobacco production were like performances in a stage production, a grand pageant directed by the cigar manufacturers. The manufacturers had little control over the mood of the consumer—little ability to make people smoke more cigars. But they are the ones who developed homogenized leaf tobacco, they helped orchestrate the increase in imports, and they made the decision to reduce the production of domestic shade tobacco. After all, the cigar makers had sole discretion to buy or not to

[6] "Tobacco growers call for federal help," *Tallahassee Democrat*, 10 July 1975, 13.
[7] Robert Zabawa and Christina Gladwin, "Using anthropological tools to understand Florida's farming systems and the survival of Florida's small farmers," *Florida Journal of Anthropology* 8 (1983): 39.
[8] "The pace is geared to growing things," *Tallahassee Democrat*, 13 May 1981. Strickland's 6,500 acres is a slight exaggeration, but doesn't detract from his point.

buy Florida shade. The cigar makers had the discretion to increase production of Connecticut shade, to decrease its production, or to cease production entirely. Robert Zabawa put it this way: "While on the one hand, the tobacco companies promoted the farmers' crop, gave out forward contracts, and provided operating monies, at the same time the companies promoted foreign production and technological change. When the tobacco companies began to remove their market and financial support starting in the late 1960s, shade tobacco production in Gadsden County was doomed."[9] Zabawa confined his study to Gadsden County, but his conclusions apply to the entire Georgia-Florida region. The conclusions apply to the Connecticut Valley, as well, with the understanding that the tobacco companies owned the Connecticut farms, so small levels of production continued in Connecticut after it was halted in Florida. But Connecticut's reprieve was temporary. Year by year, production was cut back. Today, only a token amount of shade is grown in Connecticut—just enough to enable to cigar makers to offer Connecticut shade-wrapped cigars as a specialty product.[10]

For Florida, the end had come quickly. A crop that was failing but still viable in 1974 disappeared entirely in 1977. As it expired, farmers and farm laborers were forced to change their lives in response.

[9] Robert Zabawa, "Macro-Micro Linkages and Structural Transformation: The Move from Full-Time to Part-Time Farming in a North Florida Agricultural Community," *American Anthropologist* 89 (1983): 372.
[10] Don Genrich, interview by author, Havana, Florida, 28 February 2003.

CHAPTER 7

SAVING SHADE—OR REPLACING IT

A Gadsden County Chamber of Commerce brochure published in the 1950s disclosed the county's vulnerability to a downturn in shade tobacco production. The publication listed the county's major agricultural products and underscored, even then, the farmers' willingness to diversify beyond the primary crop:

Shade tobacco	3,500,000 lbs.
Flue tobacco	350,000 lbs.
Beef cattle	9,000 head
Dairy cattle	2,000 head
Swine	12,000 head
Tung nuts	500,000 lbs.
Pecans	100,000 lbs.[1]

The nature of farming requires farmers to be alert to alternate crop possibilities. Dependence on a single crop is risky. Pests or pestilence can infest a crop, damaging it or destroying it entirely. Technology can make a crop obsolete, as in the case of naval stores, tung oil, and many others. New production regions can render a crop non-competitive as in the case of cotton, oranges—and, as it turned out, shade tobacco. It is common, therefore, for farmers, acting alone or in concert, to assiduously seek new crop options. Shade tobacco growers felt the imperative. As early as 1903, A. Cohn and Company attempted diversification when the company planted a large acreage in sugar cane on their Amsterdam, Georgia property. Cohn then bought a small sugar refinery in Louisiana and erected it at Amsterdam, intending to produce "New Orleans Standard Granulated Sugar." The experiment failed in the first season.[2]

When shade tobacco died in the Georgia-Florida shade tobacco district, it shared the fate of other crops that had once flourished in the region, then died. Through the years there have been several attempts at viniculture. One Leon County grape growing

[1] Gadsden County Chamber of Commerce, "Inventory of Industrial Advantages – Quincy, Florida," undated—probably 1953. Copy in the Florida Archives, Tallahassee.
[2] Frank S. Jones, *History of Decatur County* (Spartanburg, South Carolina: The Reprint Company, 1980), 331.

and winemaking venture began around 1900. It was abandoned after the county embraced prohibition in 1904. Wine grapes and table grapes are apparently not suited for the local climate.[3] The exception is scuppernongs, which are native to the area and adapt readily to cultivation. However, ripe scuppernongs are expensive to produce because they are picked one by one, not in bunches, as is the case with conventional grapes. Further, to generations of consumers raised on Thompson seedless grapes and now on red seedless grapes as well, the big-seeded, funny-tasting scuppernongs are not very appealing. For whatever reason, scuppernongs have not replaced shade tobacco as a dominant regional crop.[4]

Tung nuts are another example of a crop that has disappeared. Some farmers in the shade tobacco counties planted tung trees, which are native to China, and harvested the nuts for processing into oil used by the paint and varnish industry. First planted in 1906 from specimens provided by the United States Department of Agriculture, production continued into the 1960s, encouraged by an increase in demand when the Communist victory in China cut off that country as a source. With the development of advanced hydrocarbon products in the middle of the 20th century, however, tung oil was rendered partially obsolete and farmers abandoned or chopped down their tung tree orchards.[5]

Turpentining, or more properly, naval stores, was an important industry in the area during the first half of the 20th century. There again, synthetic products derived from hydrocarbons, especially petroleum, proved to be cheaper to produce and provided broader ranges of physical and chemical properties. Before 1960, the naval stores industry had largely disappeared from the Georgia-Florida region, and indeed, throughout most of the South.[6]

Cotton, once the most important crop in the South and second only to tobacco in the shade tobacco district, disappeared locally during the period when it vanished from

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[3] Clifton Paisley, *From Cotton to Quail: An Agricultural Chronicle of Leon County, Florida 1860-1967* (Gainesville, University of Florida Press, 1968) 49-51.
[4] Clara Jane Smith, interview by author, Bainbridge, Georgia, 18 October 2003.
[5] Paisley, *Cotton to Quail*, 119-120.
[6] Tommy Wheeler, interview by author, Bainbridge, Georgia, 2 July 2002; Mayo Livingston, interview by author, Bainbridge, Georgia, 7 March 2002. For more on the naval stores industry, see Robert Outland, "Another New South: Patterns of Continuity in the Southern Naval Stores Industry" (Ph.D. dissertation, Louisiana State University, 1999).

much of the Deep South. Cotton was victim of the boll weevil, and at the same time victim of more efficient production in such newer producing regions as Texas and California.[7]

Shade tobacco farmers were aware of their peril. So were the various support agencies and institutions including the USDA, state agriculture departments and university agriculture schools. All contributed to the efforts to save shade tobacco and to find alternate crops, efforts that became more critical as the future of shade tobacco became more doubtful.

A "farmer-inventor" designed and built a radically different barn intended to revolutionize the curing process. The "Solaranza" barn, as he called it, was only one-third the size of a typical shade tobacco barn; it used solar heat instead of propane stoves. The inventor claimed it would save nearly 90 percent of the fuel cost necessary for curing. There were additional advantages. The cure took nineteen days instead of twenty-eight, the barn could be built for one-fourth less than a conventional barn, and it offered significant savings in the amount of labor required to load and unload the tobacco. The inventor was unable to interest a single farmer in trying out his creation.[8]

Further diversification in tobacco was a possibility. Shade growers might not want to battle for share of market in cigarette tobacco, but other specialty tobaccos might hold promise of success. During the 1960s shade growers became interested in growing *candela* cigar wrapper, a premium wrapper with an attractive green color. Candela is conventional wrapper tobacco cured in special barns and with higher temperatures than is the case with ordinary wrapper. Formerly supplied by Cuba, the American embargo shut off the island nation as the source of the product. Perhaps twenty-five expatriate Cuban cigar experts helped opportunistic Florida growers scramble to fill the void in supply. At first, candela culture was promising: the 1964 crop totaled 750 acres and yielded 50 percent higher profits than conventional shade tobacco. But the green leaf proved not to

[7] Tommy Wheeler, interview by author, Bainbridge, Georgia, 2 July 2002. Wheeler continues the story of cotton, explaining that the USDA recognized the seriousness of the boll weevil problem and, after years of effort, developed a regimen for controlling the pest. The crop has returned to many parts of the Deep South where it had been abandoned; in some South Georgia counties it is now the leading crop, both in acres planted and income generated.

[8] "C. A.Brinks Uses Florida Sun In Tobacco Curing Process," The *Chattahoochee Tribun*e, vol. 59, no. 26, 25 June 1959, 1.

be a panacea. When shade tobacco production moved offshore, candela moved with it.[9] "Turkish" tobaccos, aromatic varieties blended into cigarette and pipe mixtures, did not prove successful in the area. Demand is not large compared with the demand for other types of tobacco, so existing sources were adequate to supply the market.[10]

American Sumatra Tobacco Corporation had the most to lose as changes occurred in shade tobacco supply and demand. The company was resourceful in its explorations of other crop possibilities. In Connecticut, in 1955, AST set up a new subsidiary company, Imperial Nurseries, to grow domestic plants—plants and trees used in landscaping. The New England operations successfully served the continuing postwar housing boom in the metropolitan northeastern corridor of the country. By 1964, the original test site of two acres had grown to 600 acres. Florida nursery plant operations, initiated in 1957, were entirely containerized—plants were grown in the containers in which they would later be shipped and sold. This new growing technique provided labor-saving advantages over the conventional method, which required digging up each individual plant or tree and putting it in a pot or wrapping it in a burlap bag.[11]

Vegetables offered much promise. Truck farming is similar in many ways to growing shade tobacco. Both involve irrigation systems, intensive cultivation, and relatively small plots. In 1954, construction of a 12,800 sq. ft. farmers market was completed three miles west of Quincy. The following year growers reported nearly 400 acres planted in fall vegetables. In 1960, another vegetable growers meeting added up the acreage of three crops and reported 250 acres of tomatoes, 50 acres of cantaloupes, and 25 acres of potatoes under cultivation.[12] 1966, the Quincy Farmers Mart building had grown to 28,800 sq. ft., the size of a large supermarket. The Mart trumpeted "the largest peach crop in history" and offered spring and fall crops of pole beans, bunch beans, squash and peas, plus special fall crops of bell peppers, eggplant and cucumbers.[13]

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[9] "Gadsden County Candela Leaf Is Equal In Quality To Original Cuban Tobacco." *Tallahassee Democrat*, 6 September 1964, 3; Zabawa, "Macro-Micro Linkages," 371; Mary Frances Donalson, "If Cuba Does It, Georgia Does it Better," Atlanta *Journal and Constitution*, 4 July 1963, 43; Pete Miller, interview by author, Attapulgus, Georgia, 18 June 2003.
[10] *Gadsden County Times*, vol. 55, no. 26, 30 June 1955, 1.
[11] John Sparmann, telephone interview by author, 27 January 2003.
[12] *Gadsden County Times*, vol. 60, no. 30, 28 July 1960, 1.
[13] Tommy Edwards, "An Idea Grows Up—Quincy Farmers Mart," Tallahassee *Democrat*, 10 July 1966, 3D.

Some concepts were more fanciful, including the initiative of several tobacco farmers who in 1948 decided to grow fish. Not catfish—bass and bream. The ponds for aquaculture were already in place in the form of natural and man-made reservoirs used for irrigating the tobacco. All that was necessary was to throw in the fingerlings, feed them, and eventually, bring them to harvest. The ventures apparently failed very quickly: there is no further record of bass or bream cultivation in the county.[14]

Deciding to Change

As the demise of shade tobacco production became inevitable, Florida growers had to make some decisions. First was whether or not to continue farming. Some farm families retired from farming and supported themselves with non-farming employment, or else lived on savings. Many who ceased farm operations planted their farms in pine trees, banking value for the next generation. Although most shade farmers also had cattle operations, these were only adjuncts to the production of tobacco. Most farmers quickly liquidated their herds. Some land was close enough to Tallahassee to be attractive for residential development. The Havana Country Club and the Country Club Estates subdivision, both on the north side of Havana, were built on land that formerly belonged to AST. Quincy Farms, the large mushroom production company southwest of Quincy, was developed on what once was a tobacco field. Quincy's industrial park stands on another former tobacco farm.[15] The mushroom operation is significant. The initial building was 190,000 sq. ft.—larger than a Super Wal-Mart store. One of the largest mushroom production facilities in the world, the $10 million structure is air-conditioned and computer operated.[16]

Despite these imaginative ventures, most shade tobacco farmers stayed with farming. Two crops have emerged as the primary replacements for the weed, especially when measured in terms of farm income. Both crops require good soil and good irrigation systems. Both are labor intensive and management intensive. There are eight large plant nursery operations in Gadsden County and one in Decatur County; combined annual sales of these operations is more than $80 million. Two nurseries are part of large

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[14] Ben L. Kerce, "Man-Made 'Fish Farms' Assure Bass and Bream—and Irrigation." *Jackson County* Floridian, 9 January 1948.
[15] Susan DeFord, "Mushrooms, flowers herald town's new era," Tallahassee *Democrat*, 22 June 1981, 1-2B
[16] Sylvan, Inc., www.sylvaninc.com/index.shtml, 1 October 2003. Sylvan, the corporate parent of Quincy Farms, calls itself the world's leading supplier of spawn—"mushroom seed."

corporate structures. Six families who formerly grew shade tobacco own the other nurseries, growing trees and flowers where they once grew cigar wrapper. In the period immediately after shade production ceased, nursery workers included many former shade tobacco workers. The new jobs were better, however, because they were year-round jobs, not seasonal work. In the case of Imperial Nursery workers, not only were the jobs full-time jobs, but also for the first time workers were paid the minimum wage rate, and they received such employment benefits as health insurance and paid vacations.[17]

Tomatoes are the other major crop. There are two seasons per year—"windows" between the times when major tomato-growing areas in South Florida and North Carolina are in production. The Georgia-Florida region grows "greens" and "pinks," and has in recent years added new varieties: Romas, grapes, pears, cherries, and uglies. The first large-scale tomato crop was grown in 1976; all fourteen Gadsden County farmers who grew the initial crop were former shade producers.[18] Today, annual farm income generated by tomatoes totals $50 to $60 million.[19]

The labor situation was not at all like the situation in nursery operations. Tomatoes are a seasonal crop. A large field requires scores of workers to set out the young plants, erect the stakes, and lay down the plastic sheeting used for weed control. The workers are not again needed until harvest; tomatoes are picked entirely by hand and once again, a large field requires scores of workers. From the start, unlike the situation in nursery operations, African American workers were not employed for this work. They were not interested in returning to the hot, hard toil required for stoop labor jobs, and they wanted full-time jobs. Further, many had moved after the tobacco plantations ceased operating. Some moved into town—Quincy, Bainbridge, Tallahassee, Havana, Greensboro, Gretna—others left the region entirely. Most tomato processors already had production in Central and South Florida where Latin-American migrant workers provided the necessary seasonal labor input. Migrants were recruited, transported, and supervised

[17] John Sparmann, telephone interview by author, 27 January 2003. Henry Grant, telephone interview by author, 20 October 2003.
[18] Robert Zabawa and Christina Gladwin, "Using anthropological tools to understand Florida's farming systems and the survival of Florida's small farmers," *Florida Journal of Anthropology* 8 (1983): 56.
[19] Henry Grant, telephone interview by author, 20 October 2003.

by labor contractors. The processors simply asked their existing labor contractors to add the new production area to their responsibilities.[20]

Decatur County farm products are more diverse than those in Gadsden County. In addition to tomatoes, a crop that totals more than $90 million per year in farm income, Decatur farmers grow cotton valued at $24 million per year and peanuts valued at $20 million per year. Poultry production adds approximately $22 million annually. In 2001, the most recent year for which Georgia farm statistics are available, the average farm income in Decatur County came to $581,000. Although Florida agricultural statistics do not include average farm income, the Gadsden County extension agent judges that average farm income for his county is greater than that in Decatur County, based on the relatively low number of small farms in Gadsden County.[21]

County extension agents in both Gadsden and Decatur Counties now judge that current farm income, after adjusting for inflation, roughly approximates farm income before the demise of shade tobacco production. There are fewer farmers now, and they are, on average, larger than during the heyday of shade tobacco. The better operators not only survived, they prospered. Most farm workers did not continue as farm workers, at least partly of their own choice. The exception is in the nurseries, where year-round employment is available to former shade tobacco workers, and their children. In tomatoes, migrant labor is the rule. In the case of the other crops, there is no labor force required—production is mechanized.[22]

Farmers, aided by county extension agents, tried valiantly over a period of years to save shade tobacco—to work out a reason for cigar makers to continue to rely on Florida production. All efforts failed, so most larger farmers turned to alternative agricultural products and to horticulture. In these endeavors they have been successful—for the most part, more successful than ever. The outcome for workers was different, but in its own way successful, as discussed in the conclusion.

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[20] Sylvester Woodward, interview by author, Gadsden County, Florida, 5 February 2003. Henry Grant, interview by author, 20 October 2003.
[21] Mitchell May, interview by author, 17 October 2003.
[22] May, interview. Grant, interview.

CONCLUSION

Marginal Role

Earlier studies of the Georgia-Florida shade tobacco industry focused on the authors' particular areas of interest. These scholars crafted good economic examinations of the industry, well-documented decision-making models, competent spatial analyses, and so on. It has been more than twenty-five years since the harvest of the last crop of shade and we are now able to place what we know in a broader frame of reference. Previous studies examined warp and woof; the purpose of this study has been to look at the fabric.

It is increasingly clear that Florida shade tobacco was a marginal product—marginal in the sense that large companies dominated the cigar and cigar-tobacco businesses, and, while Florida tobacco growers played an important support role, it was not an indispensable one.

In a worldwide context, Florida shade was always closer to the brink than its participants realized. The high profits of the 1940s were attributable to an exogenous event, World War II, and not to Florida growers' activities. Other outside forces—the U. S. government, in the case of the embargo on Cuba, and the U. S. government again, in the case of the 1964 Surgeon General's Report—produced big gains and losses, respectively, for the farmers and farm workers in the district.

Triumph of Globalism

It was an outside force that caused the demise of the business, when good and cheap wrapper tobacco from Central America and the Caribbean finally flooded the market. Interestingly, the biggest beneficiary of this market shift is an American company with long ties to Florida growers. For years, the Oliva Tobacco Company of Ybor City, Florida cooperated closely with North Florida planters. Headed by a Cuban expatriate who emigrated in the 1920s, Oliva Tobacco bought and sold Florida wrapper, acting as a major international dealer and often participating as a grower, as well. When

imports of candela wrapper from Cuba were barred from the U. S., Angel Oliva, the company's founder, sponsored the plan that brought candela-processing expertise to the U. S. And when candela production moved offshore, Oliva Tobacco Company took the product to Central America. Today, Oliva is the largest grower of shade tobacco in the world, filling the place occupied for many years by American Sumatra Tobacco Company. Except for occasional test plots or minor ventures in Connecticut, all Oliva production is in Honduras, the Dominican Republic, and Ecuador. The company essentially grows nothing in the United States.[1]

Since the early part of the twentieth century, Florida shade's role in the domestic industry was always subordinate to that of the Connecticut River Valley. It is hard to determine whether Connecticut tobacco was favored over Florida tobacco because it was a superior product, or whether the cigar companies' ownership of Connecticut farms dictated the prefatory treatment that Connecticut received. The result was the same either way—Connecticut tobacco was the preferred product; Florida tobacco the marginal one.

The life and death of the shade tobacco industry—in Connecticut as well as Florida—is an unambiguous example of capitalism. In a Wallersteinian sense,[2] surplus value was pulled upward, to the decision-making capitalists. The forces of capitalism then worked to increase profitability. Profit maximization requires cutting losses at the margin. Florida shade was at the margin—and Florida shade was cut out of the picture. Shortly after, Connecticut shade was at the margin—and Connecticut shade was almost entirely cut out of the picture.[3]

The extinguishment of shade tobacco as a crop presaged disruption in the rest of the cigar and cigar wrapper industry. American Sumatra Tobacco Company still exists, although under another name. The company runs horticulture operations in Connecticut and Florida and develops real estate in suburban Hartford.[4] Consolidated Cigar Corporation, still the world's largest cigar maker, has been bought and sold several times in recent years. The company currently is a subsidiary of Altadis, a new company

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[1] John Oliva, telephone interview by author, 24 October 2003. A lengthy magazine article describes Oliva activities in recent years: Michael Kaplan, "The First Family of Tobacco," *Cigar Aficionado*, 2002, http://www.cigaraficionado.com/Cigar/CA_Profiles/Cigar_Stars_Profile/0,2547,137,00.html,

[2] Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Essential Wallerstein* (New York: New Press, 2000).

[3] Appendix B tracks the decline of shade tobacco in both growing areas.

[4] Chris Burley, Darrell L. Childs, and Jonathan D. Walker, "Imperial Nurseries, Inc." http://www.eng.fsu.edu/ME_senior_design/2000/team01/impnurs.html, 2 February 2003.

formed by the merger of Tabacalera, the Spanish state-owned tobacco monopoly privatized in 1998, and Seita, the French state tobacco company privatized in 1995.[5] Altadis recently bought fifty percent interest in Habanos SA, the Cuban state-owned tobacco monopoly.[6] This is globalization at its finest—capitalist America's bellwether cigar maker, in combination with two government-owned competitors, have now joined with an enterprise owned by a country against which the U. S. has maintained an embargo for forty years!

Globalization created other ironies. Deli Maatschappij, the Dutch company that first tormented American cigar wrapper producers in the post-Civil War period, then tormented American growers by purchasing the largest of their number, now is a wholly owned subsidiary of Universal Corporation, of Richmond, Virginia, the world's largest tobacco dealer.[7]

Farmers and Workers

In the meantime, what has happened to the people? Chapter 7 concludes that farmers in the district are now better off, on balance, than they were even during the most active years of shade tobacco cultivation. County extension agents of both counties have recorded farmers' success in the years since they stopped growing shade. Most farms remain in the hands of the families that owned them for decades, and younger family members are now in charge.

I found no studies of the region's former shade tobacco workers. Because of the distinctiveness of the crop and the boundedness of the region, the topic should appeal to sociologists, economists, anthropologists, geographers, and historians, as well as to specialists from agriculture schools and business schools.

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[5] Altadis S.A., "The Birth of Altadis," http://www.altadis.com/en/quienes/nuestrahistoria/html, 27 July 2003. Seita is best known as the manufacturer of *Gitanes* and *Gauloises* cigarettes.
[6] Altadis, U.S.A., "A Slice of Americana," http://www.altadisusa.com/company.asp, 27 July 2003. This web site also informs us that the founder of Consolidated Cigar Corporation in 1918 was Julius Lichtenstein, at the time president of American Sumatra Tobacco Company.
[7] Universal Corporation, "History," http://www.universalcorp.com/AboutUs/AboutUs-History.asp, 27 July 2003.

Although no scholarly analysis has yet been published, it is useful to look at anecdotal information and the results of interviews. The former general manager of the Englehard mines in Attapulgus, Georgia recalls that his company hired many workers during the 1960s and 1970s who were former shade tobacco workers, or their children. During the same period Floridin Industries, a fuller's earth competitor of Englehard, hired many veterans of shade tobacco fields for their Gadsden County operations.[8] The men who headed the local Georgia Department of Labor office in Bainbridge from the 1960s through the 1990s know that a small number of workers, particularly older ones, dropped out of the work force. They "got by" on odd jobs and food stamps; some received help from members of their extended family groups. Most workers found relatively good local jobs. In addition to the mines, many tobacco workers went to work for Elberta Crate & Box Company, a Bainbridge manufacturing company. Others ended up at one of Decatur County's two large carpet fiber plants.[9]

Of former African American workers interviewed for this paper, one is an administrative vice-president of Florida A & M University; another is a researcher for the Pew Charitable Trust in Philadelphia. A man whose mechanical talents first surfaced on a tobacco farm now heads the truck maintenance facility for the City of Tallahassee; an older gentleman has operated a lawn maintenance service for thirty years, and is president of the regional Shape Note Society, an organization of amateur choristers.[10]

All, farmers and workers, remember their years in shade tobacco very clearly, and every one I interviewed professed a fondness for it. Everyone I interviewed also believes they are better off today.

[8] Jim Hines, interview by author, 27 October 2003.
[9] Charles Perry, interview by author, 27 October 2003; Don Bryan, telephone interview by author, 28 October 2003.
[10] Patricia Green-Powell, interview by author, Bainbridge, Georgia, 30 March 2001; Jereann King, interview by author, Attapulgus, Georgia, 4 April 2002; Kenny Jerger, interview by author, 10 November 2001; Paul Wilson, interview by author, Bainbridge, Georgia, 10 September 2003.

APPENDIX A

U. S. LARGE CIGAR PRODUCTION, 1955-1992
In Millions

Year	*Total*	*Year*	*Total*
1955	5,764	1975	4,523
1956	5,662	1976	4,178
1957	5,897	1977	3,917
1958	6,216	1978	3,795
1959	6,609	1979	3,600
1960	6,768	1980	3,454
1961	6,454	1981	3,428
1962	6,599	1982	3,168
1963	6,653	1983	3,136
1964	8,728	1984	3,140
1965	7,899	1985	2,822
1966	7,165	1986	2,949
1967	6,857	1987	2,116
1968	7,183	1988	1,980
1969	6,931	1989	1,973
1970	7,094	1990	1,896
1971	6,709	1991	1,740
1972	6,025	1992	1,740
1973	5,655	--	--
1974	5,274	--	--

Source: United States Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, "Tobacco Statistics," Stock #94012, Table 11.

APPENDIX B

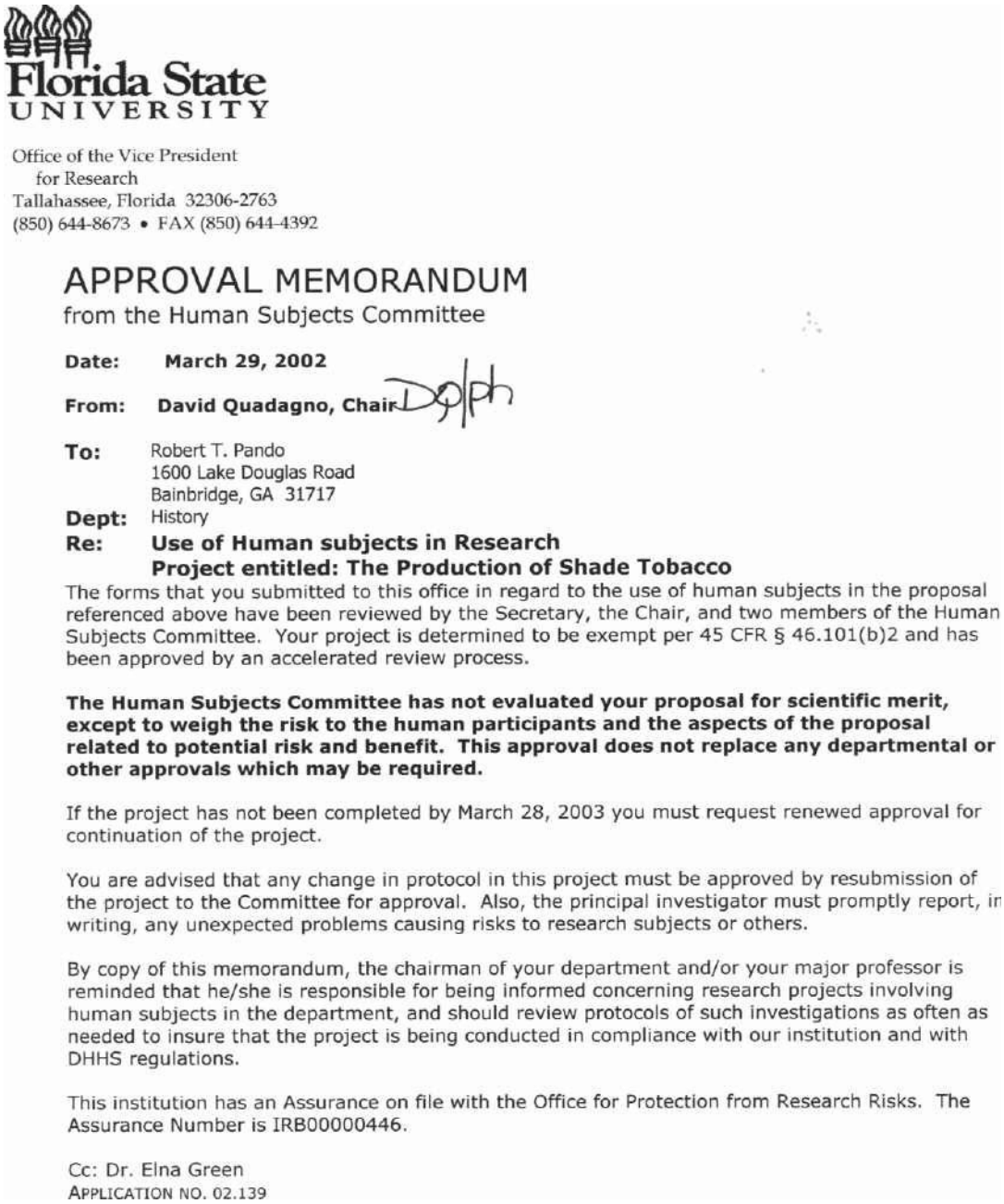
CIGAR WRAPPER ACREAGE AND PRODUCTION, 1955-1994
Connecticut River Valley and Georgia-Florida District

Year	*Acres Harvested*	*Production (1,000 pounds)*	*Year*	*Acres Harvested*	*Production (1,000 pounds)*
1955	12,900	15,647	1975	5,470	7,706
1956	13,300	17,162	1976	4,600	7,198
1957	13,100	18,887	1977	3,420	5,292
1958	12,900	16,551	1978	2,710	3,773
1959	14,000	18,551	1979	2,720	4,003
1960	14,600	21,309	1980	2,990	4,524
1961	13,400	19,150	1981	2,600	4,138
1962	13,200	19,325	1982	1,120	1,592
1963	12,900	18,696	1983	980	1,672
1964	13,800	21,120	1984	1,220	1,725
1965	15,600	22,898	1985	1,360	2,041
1966	14,600	21,018	1986	1,330	1,684
1967	13,600	17,577	1987	1,280	1,590
1968	13,450	18,068	1988	1,380	2,108
1969	11,250	15,879	1989	1,480	2,283
1970	9,600	14,932	1990	1,630	2,652
1971	7,680	12,397	1991	1,450	2,228
1972	7,100	9,691	1992	1,000	1,514
1973	7,630	9,766	1992	1,080	1,577
1974	6,650	10,988	1994	1,190	1,666

Source: United States Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, "Tobacco Statistics," Stock #94012, Table 108.

APPENDIX C

HUMAN SUBJECTS COMMITTEE—APPROVAL MEMORANDUM



Florida State
UNIVERSITY

Office of the Vice President
for Research
Tallahassee, Florida 32306-2763
(850) 644-8673 • FAX (850) 644-4392

APPROVAL MEMORANDUM

from the Human Subjects Committee

Date: **March 29, 2002**

From: **David Quadagno, Chair**

To: Robert T. Pando
1600 Lake Douglas Road
Bainbridge, GA 31717

Dept: History

Re: **Use of Human subjects in Research**
Project entitled: The Production of Shade Tobacco

The forms that you submitted to this office in regard to the use of human subjects in the proposal referenced above have been reviewed by the Secretary, the Chair, and two members of the Human Subjects Committee. Your project is determined to be exempt per 45 CFR § 46.101(b)2 and has been approved by an accelerated review process.

The Human Subjects Committee has not evaluated your proposal for scientific merit, except to weigh the risk to the human participants and the aspects of the proposal related to potential risk and benefit. This approval does not replace any departmental or other approvals which may be required.

If the project has not been completed by March 28, 2003 you must request renewed approval for continuation of the project.

You are advised that any change in protocol in this project must be approved by resubmission of the project to the Committee for approval. Also, the principal investigator must promptly report, in writing, any unexpected problems causing risks to research subjects or others.

By copy of this memorandum, the chairman of your department and/or your major professor is reminded that he/she is responsible for being informed concerning research projects involving human subjects in the department, and should review protocols of such investigations as often as needed to insure that the project is being conducted in compliance with our institution and with DHHS regulations.

This institution has an Assurance on file with the Office for Protection from Research Risks. The Assurance Number is IRB00000446.

Cc: Dr. Elna Green
APPLICATION NO. 02.139

APPENDIX D

HUMAN SUBJECTS COMMITTEE—REAPPROVAL MEMORANDUM

Florida State
UNIVERSITY

Office of the Vice President
For Research
Tallahassee, Florida 32306-2763
(850) 644-5260 · FAX (850) 644-4392

REAPPROVAL MEMORANDUM
from the Human Subjects Committee

Date: 2/28/2003

Robert Pando
1600 Lake Douglas Rd.
Bainbridge GA 39819

From: **David Quadagno, Chair**

Dept.: **History**

Re: **Reapproval of Use of Human subjects in Research:**
The Production Of Shade Tobacco

Your request to continue the research project listed above involving human subjects has been approved by the Human Subjects Committee. If your project has not been completed by 3/28/2004 please request renewed approval.

You are reminded that a change in protocol in this project must be approved by resubmission of the project to the Committee for approval. Also, the principal investigator must report to the Chair promptly, and in writing, any unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others.

By copy of this memorandum, the Chairman of your department and/or your major professor are reminded of their responsibility for being informed concerning research projects involving human subjects in their department. They are advised to review the protocols of such investigations as often as necessary to insure that the project is being conducted in compliance with our institution and with DHHS regulations.

Cc: Dr. Elna Green
HSC No. 2003.099-R

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Robert T. Pando received a B. A. degree in interdepartmental social studies from West Texas A & M University in June 1960.